THE WAY OF THE GODS

By Aquila Kempster

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THE WAY OF THE GODS

BY

AQUILA KEMPSTER

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To My "Lady Babbie,"
Chief Aider and Abettor of Both My
Work and Play,
I Dedicate This Volume.

INTRODUCTORY.

In writing the following stories I have been reminded of nothing so much as those deliciously lazy moments when waking from a dreamful sleep. The memory of the wonderful experiences in which one has revelled are fading fast—are almost gone, though they still appeal to the sensuous imagination —and we eagerly hark back to gather here a fancy that still has power to charm, and there to shrink from the bogie that even yet, with the sun streaming through the curtains, has not been stripped entirely of his dream terrors. I know of nothing so luxurious as those few minutes; nothing so alluring, even as I know nothing so bracing and dream-dispelling as the sudden sharp chill of the bath five minutes later, after which the world of dreams becomes a most far away and trivial thing.

So I have harked back through a dreamy haze to the years of my student life in India;

a life that I was forced to leave before the glamour was gone, before the bazaars had lost their possibilities, and the Mogul and Hindoo alike their charm.

I have gone back to a time when, with a boy's imagination, I dwelt in the realms of fantasy. Out of that by-gone dream world I have taken my friends and foes, and the little incidents that then seemed commonplace. I have merely held the threads; beyond that the tales have spun themselves.

I take pleasure in acknowledging the kindness of the editor of The New York Press in granting permission for the republication of some of the following stories which appeared first in his paper.

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THE WAY OF THE GODS.

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CHAPTER I.

AGER MIRZA.

There are some dozen things in my study —hanging on the walls, stuck on top of the bookcase, and littered about generally—that serve to remind one in thoughtful moments of the perplexing methods the gods use in fooling men.

With much patient care they weave a rope for a victim's neck, then at the last moment—cut it; they drive a man with harrowing blows to the dizzy edge of some sheer precipice, down which they have already hung a ladder for his safe descent. Of course sometimes the ladder isn't there, the gods forget to cut the rope, and then it's awkward for the victim. But generally as you look back from effect to cause, the amount of force used seems out of all proportion to the result

achieved, so that we come to wonder who is laughing best, the gods or we.

The thing in my den that oftenest attracts my attention is about as ugly-looking a knife as ever was tempered for nasty purposes. I make a practice, while I am smoking, of trying to stare the ruffianly thing out of countenance. I haven't quite succeeded yet, though I'm gradually getting over that little contraction of the throat that the sight of it causes. However, here's the way of it:

I was coming from the officers' mess dance at Colaba, and, as the night was fine, I left the stuffy buggy that had brought me in at Crawford Market, determining to get a sherbet and then walk up to Byculla Hospital, where I was booked as a student. I was only a few months out from home, and that walk through the Boree bazaar at night was still a thing of joy to me, though my faith in its Al Raschid possibilities was beginning to falter.

After my sherbet I lighted another Trinchinopoly, and with my cane under my arm started off up the narrow street. The shops were all closed, though here and there the sweet-stuff venders still kept vigil, each dozing under his little awning. I started up the

sidewalk, but the monotony of stepping over unending rows of sleepers, to say nothing of the possibility of accidentally treading on some gentleman with a short temper, drove me into the street; and here I walked till at last I came to the lane just past the great hospital gates that led to the student's bungalow, politely christened by the natives "Chota bhud khanna," which, "being done into English," reads "The Little Devil's Home."

Now the lane that leads to this tastefully named abode is long and dark and held in evil repute by the lower caste bazaar men; but, as it is a short cut to Malabar Hill, the more enlightened use it occasionally. I was just turning up the lane with a half regretful sigh that "nothing had happened again," when I suddenly stood stock still listening intently.

What was it? Bandakoots fighting?—the lane was full of the beasts. Yes—no—by Jove! that was no bandakoot, but some pretty tall native cursing, then the ring of steel, and I realized with a profane exclamation of delight that at last something had happened.

There were four of 'em at it, cutting and slashing like a lot of Afghans, and just as I got up one fellow went down with the rest

on top of him. Of course I chose sides by hitting the first head that came in reach of my stick. Now, why that particular head should have belonged to a Mussulman, and an Afghan at that, when all the rest were Hindoos, is part of my puzzle. You see, you can kick a Hindoo with impunity and much satisfaction, but an Afghan in an entirely different problem, as I learned by experience later.

The man's puggaree took the brunt of the blow, but did not save him from an ugly gash across the forehead, just over the left eye. He rolled over with a cry of fright or warning, and the next instant three of them were up and facing me, while the fourth lay still between us. I knew enough not to wait for them to get their wits and rush me, and, trusting to my white uniform to finish their scare, I jumped straight at them, swinging my stick as I went. They didn't stop to feel its weight, though my Afghan did make a dig at me before he turned tail; but as the blood was streaming in his eyes he missed me by a quarter of a yard.

The man on the ground was in an ugly mess, as I saw at the first glance, so I climbed the hospital railing, and, taking a short cut

through the botanical garden, came out on the driveway, and in three minutes had the hamals out on the double with a dooley swinging between them.

The moonlight was touching the lower part of the body in the lane; but the face lay back among the shadows, so that neither the bearers nor I saw it as we lifted the man in the dooley, and thus it happened that a Rajan prince lay that night between life and death in the pauper casual ward, in an atmosphere that fairly reeked with the foul breathing of a score of outcasts, bhang and arrack fiends and the like; but it troubled him little, for his soul was come to a straitened way—to the very gates of death.

In the morning Dapin Bole, my ward boy, whispered to me that he had recognized the man as he lay in the office when they first brought him in, and that he could have given his name to the attendant apothecary, but that he was a man of peace and it was none of his business.

"Well," I asked, "and who was he anyway?"

"Arre, sahib, whisper," he muttered; "I take no sides. I am a man of peace, you understand, and some say this and some say

that and much blood is shed, and Krishna knows who is right, but the man is Ager Mirza."

Ager Mirza! What a name to conjure with! Where was Al Raschid now? Ager Mirza who could raise a riot in just about seven seconds and quell it in less. Ager Mirza the Magnificent, with his wonderful horses, with his palace on Malabar Hill, who rode in native state to the government durbar, a blaze of wonderful jewels, or lounged in the fort like an English gentleman, whom every thieving fakir swore by and every boree strove to stand well with. The native whom the police let severely alone and who stood between them and the masses; this was the man whom I had been fortunate enough to aid, and he was lying between life and death in that wretched hole down stairs, entered on the hospital blotter as a common mut walla (drunk and disorderly).

Of course I had heard of him; the bazaars were always humming about him and his doings, and, as they never lost in the telling, he had appealed to my imagination as a wonderful hero, as the crystallization of all that I thought the Orient ought to be. To be sure,

the Eurasians sniffed at him as a native; but even so, I couldn't for the life of me see the force of the sniff or where it came in; but I suppose it makes all the difference in your view point whether your cheeks are red or brown.

So I went to the casual ward, where the man had been made as comfortable as possible with screens and punkahs, and in the weeks that followed I grew to know him better than many of his most enthusiastic followers, and the better I knew him the more I liked him, and he responded to my boyish admiration with a cordiality that riveted the beginnings of a friendship that has stood the test of time and distance and good and evil repute, and flourishes to-day in the memory of both, I think, fresh and strong as ever.

Four days after Mirza had been brought in, I was passing through the great hall where the gigantic statue of Sir Jamsetjee, the founder, is supposed to awe the too hilarious medical tyro and produce the state of gravity proper to so great a place of learning, and as I went out the police bullock-garrie drove up, and a moment later the superintendent himself appeared. Three pretty tough looking bazaar men were bundled out

of the garrie and hustled down the corridor to the casual ward. I half suspected what was up and when the superintendent caught me by the arm and pulled me after them I was sure.

The men were taken behind the screens to Mirza's bedside and he was asked to identify them as the men who had assaulted him. He looked at them keenly, critically, half sarcastically, as they groveled before him, swearing their innocence and imploring him for the sake of their wives and little ones not to mistake them for the budmashes that the police persisted in thinking them. Their pleadings would have been pitiful had not their groveling terror spoiled the effect, and at last Mirza turned his head away with a face of weary disgust, saying to the superintendent with a hardly disguised sneer: "Another of your clever catches, Mr. Superintendent, but I can't help you. I don't know the men."

The officer's face flushed angrily. "Not know them! Why, we have every proof against them; they gave themselves clear away. What do you mean, sir?"

"Exactly what I say; and as for your proofs

and their 'giving themselves away,' I know your methods. I remember how some of my friends 'gave themselves away' when you got them on the rack. Still, that's not the question. I don't know these men and I won't incriminate them. Now, you know me, or you ought to by this time, so please let that end it."

"No sir, that won't end it. I appeal to Mr. Marlow here. He saw the whole affair. Now sir, what do you say?" turning to me.

But I had caught a quick flash in Mirza's eyes, and answered cautiously as I looked at the men: "It was very dark, you know sir, and on my honor, I couldn't swear to them. Of course, that chap's eye is all bunged up and he looks like the very devil, still, you know, I really couldn't, especially after Mirza Sahib has denied the thing; of course he knows best.'

"Of course, of course! I merely thought that the roughing might have dazed his memory," said the policeman, covering up his anger and defeat rather clumsily, for he could not afford to have so powerful an enemy in the bazaars as Mirza. Then he added in a low tone to the sick man: "I cer-

tainly apologize, Mr. Mirza, and should not have thought of troubling you with the matter had I known your interests ran another way."

But Mirza was not to be mollified and he answered peevishly: "Never mind my interests, sir, or which way they run. I think I can look after them without any aid from the police." And he flounced round and turned his back on us in anything but a polite manner.

Now the fellow with the bunged up eye had looked out of the sound one at me with such a flash of malignant hate when I had turned to see if I could identify him that, despite of Mirza's denial, I thought the police were right; but I didn't say any more till a couple of days after. Then I asked Mirza if he was quite sure he had made no mistake about the men.

"Oh, no!" he answered smiling. "I made no mistake, as they'll find when I get out."

"Then they were the men?"

"Of course! Didn't you recognize that Afghan beast? Jove! what a lick you gave him! He was a butler at a place on the hill and—"

"Then why on earth—"

"Well, first, I don't like Mr. Policeman. I wouldn't put a mad dog in his power. He'd torture the poor beast before he killed it. Ah! I know his little ways. Besides, I'm not an infant, and I have a liking for taking care of my own business, as those men will find out when I'm well; that's all."

Mirza left the hospital on the tenth of the month, and on the fourteenth his two Hindoo assailants were brought in. I'll spare you a relation of their condition, but they stayed with us a little over four months and then went out on crutches.

Of course the Police Superintendent smelled a rat and came with a rush for their depositions; but, to my astonishment and the policeman's disgust, they informed him that they both got drunk and both fell down a well. This they stuck to sturdily, and, when too hard pressed for details, they would quietly faint with the pain of their wounds. That ended the episode, as far as they were concerned, though I may add that when they went limping out they were bound to Mirza with ties that the rack itself could never loosen, for he had taken their wives and little ones, their dogs and buffalo—aye, even the

baby's pet mongoose, and housed and cared for them all like an elder brother; even their business did not suffer for their absence. Such was the man Ager Mirza, sometimes called Prince.

I asked after our Afghan friend when I got a chance and Mirza said, "He has escaped, but God is good and time is very long."

During the next two years I was as much with my new friend as my studies and hospital work permitted, and I certainly saw sides of native life that are barely dreamed of beyond the curtain that shuts the brown from the white. Every door opened at his touch, from that of Sir Fashajee Hotiboy down to the brazen image maker's—that weazened little brown monkey—of the loveliness of whose daughters and his jealousy concerning them even the white log had heard.

I sometimes think that, after all, the native twist that he used to deride in his "brothers" was to some degree in Mirza's own brain. I cannot think that he was merely showing off, because he continued the same all the years I knew him. His ways and methods, even about the simplest things, were tortuous, but

none the less interesting on that account. Walking home through the shadowy bazaars in the dead of the night, he would here and there touch one of the sleepers on the sidewalk, pass a few words in some strange argot, and the fellow addressed would glide away into the darkness. Or a shutter would creak in a high wall above our heads and a woman's voice would whisper a message that had come from the ends of the empire, perchance, and was still officially unknown and a thousand miles away.

There was one man whom I think we always met, sooner or later, during our night rambles. Narro was a bhistee (water carrier) by day—by night I hardly like to think what—a misshapen creature, with, I think, the greatest depth and breadth of chest I have ever seen. His head was small, and, set on a short, thick neck between those huge shoulders, seemed even smaller than it was. With his long, sinuous arms reaching well below his knuckly knees and his beady little eyes sparkling from out a mane of lawless black hair, he looked like a ferocious baboon, yet when you came to know the man you saw most often a merry twinkle in his eyes

and a broad grin on the fierce, scarred face. This creature seemed always to be within hail of Mirza since his last assault; he had but to speak, even when there was no sign of the man, and there would be a soft shuffling sound and the fellow would be up fawning on Mirza like a dog on his master, and at another sign would vanish as strangely.

Now about this time came Hooly, the great Hindoo festival, when all the native world goes mad; when, crazed with opium and bhang, they make the night hideous with lewd songs as they dance in their drunken orgies round the great bonfires that light the streets. Then you see the fierce tiger that ever slumbers under the sleek Hindoo spring to savage life; you feel his hot, snarling breath, you catch the murderous fire from his eyes, and you understand the Indian Mutiny.

The city is filled by night and day with a great crowd of itinerant fakirs, card sharpers, sword swallowers, snake charmers, countrymen, wizards, wild howling priests and, mixing in with the motley throng you see the Belooch in his sheepskin poshteen, mounted always on the wonderful Beloochi mare. Hill

thieves and city thieves, cut-throats and stranglers—Hooly opens her arms to them all, and for the nonce the brown rules the white.

Naturally the inhabitants of the "Chota Bhud Khana" take advantage of this pleasant holiday time; in other words, "the little white devils" go out after blood. They had found by past experience, that the particular fun that paid best was to be got out of a piece of elastic, a leather pocket and a swan shot (some use buck, but for all around satisfaction, I think I prefer swan). The ends of the catapult are fastened to the left thumb and fore-finger and the shots lie snugly in your mouth, between your teeth and your cheek, and there you are; and if you miss a Mogul you're bound to hit a Hindoo, so what more could you want?

Some dozen of us left the compound in a bunch about half-past ten at night, all in the most hilarious spirits and indulging in various kinds of horse play as we wended our way to the scene of action. And what a scene it was, to be sure! Great bonfires, only a few yards apart, shot up lurid against the black night, while round them danced hundreds of

nude brown figures, howling and screaming as they bounded round and about the darting flames. Knives flashed freely and the sickening smell of blood filled the air, not only of sacrificed animals, but of frenzied men who cut and slashed their own bodies, burning, scarring and disfiguring themselves to the frantic applause of their audience. Each seemed bent on out-doing his neighbor in feats of blood-curdling folly. Now and again some naked priest would leap with a fierce cry right into the hungry flames; then, ere they could quite destroy him, his followers would rush, howling, and drag him out, charred and insensible, but a deity for all future years.

Meantime the swan shot whistled merrily. Zip, howl, zip, zip, zip! It was awfully funny to see a big, ruffianly swaggerer, with two or three ugly knives stuck about his naked body, howling at his people what a wonderful man he was, and then suddenly see the little swan shot nip him and cut the words short on his lips, and change them to a howl of agony as he pranced round, while his followers yelled their approbation of this new phase of spiritual unfolding.

Now there was one particularly noisy old fakir that I had been endeavoring to touch for some time, but some other body always stepped in the way and spoiled my shot. At last the crowd cleared a space, and there was the old heathen kicking up his heels not ten yards in front of me. Now, watch the way of the gods. I leaned a little forward out of the shadow and pulled the elastic, and lo! the old villian, just as I let go, sprang up like a sky rocket, and an ugly Afghan on the other side of him got the shot in his ribs and the next instant rushed at me with a yell that rang high above the tom-toms.

I tried to dodge the beast, but he came for me like a wildcat and I fell before his rush; in an instant, as I fell , I saw two things while his hot breath was choking me—a deep scar, aflame with rage, across his left eyebrow, and a scarlet streak as the fire flashed on his coming knife. God help me! How long it took to fall! How long it takes even now when the old, wicked dream gets me in its foul embrace! I could see the look of horrible, triumphant hate in the man's eyes, and even recalled the last time he had struck at me, and remembered that those terrible

eyes had been too full of blood to guide his vengeance then, but now,—well, it fell at last. My throat seemed to bunch up to meet the blow, and then, Alla il Alla! it missed me —missed me by the breath of a shadow, tearing through my coat collar and pinning me for a moment to the ground.

As I struggled up I found a pair of sturdy brown legs standing astride of me, and I had hardly recognized Mirza when the Paythan he had upset was at us again. Now, Mirza was comparatively slight, and I doubt if he ever would have been able to stand up to that brute's rush; but just before he reached us, something vague in the fitful light rolled out of the writhing crowd right into the man's path and stopped his course as abruptly as a bullet might. The next moment he struck the ground, falling on his neck with an awful thud, and then the huge misshapen form of Narro, Mirza's bodyguard, rose, with the Afghan gripped and held aloft in those black, hairy arms.

What he would have done if let alone I cannot say, but at the sight of a brother Mahometan in the toils of a Hindoo, things happened rapidly. There was a cry and an

angry rush, but Narro saw them, and, before the first man could reach him, I saw him sway once, twice, then a black mass sped through the air, and the man fell crashing right in the heart of the great fire. How long Narro faced them alone I don't know, things were too exciting to time them; but he stood like the arch of a bridge, and they broke on him like the waters under that arch. His long, flail-like arms swung ceaselessly; time after time he would stoop and seize a coming man and lift him clear and swing him like a club right in the face of the howling, blood-thirsty crew. Again and again I tried to get to my feet, but Mirza held me down with a grip of steel, and again and yet again there came from his lips a long, thin wail that meant I knew not what; but it rose thin and sharp above the awful din, and then there seemed to come an echo, faint and far, then another, till the whole bazaar was echoing to that thin, singing, reedy sound.

They came with a steady rush that drove everything before it. Where did they come from? God knows. Who and what were they? God knows that also, but they swarmed over us and round us like the inmates of

a thousand beehives gone mad. They smothered Narro and tore at his opponents like wild dogs. An awful mob they were! Peddlers, sharpers, beggars, thieves, all the scum of the town, full of arrack and bhang. And then the Mogul cry went up, and the long knives rose and sank and rose again, and the tom-toms ceased their drumming, and nothing was heard but the "haugh" of body against body and the hiss of the whirling knives. Even the roaring had nearly died away, the men saving all their breath for the end.

Suddenly a bugle sang shrilly away in the distance, then another, then one or two hoarse calls in English. "Trot! Gallop! Charge!" and the native lancers came on us like a gale, using the butts of their lances freely as they came.

Of course the mob broke and drifted before them like so many wind-blown leaves, the fires were stamped out, the jail-kana filled and also the hospital.

I got a very severe lecture from Mirza and I had bad dreams for a long time—I'm not quite over them yet.

CHAPTER II.

The Black Puma.

I never could understand how Dicky Slape came to foregather with a man like Ager Mirza. Dicky was such a serious, studious kind of chap—one of the few men in the service who had passed in Persian, while as for the numerous Hindoo dialects, he wallowed in them. He had written a book on Buddhism or some such crazy subject, and altogether took serious views of native life; and the heads of the departments nodded sagely and in a satisfied way when he was mentioned, as though crediting themselves with his many virtues.

As for Mirza, well, he was simply Mirza; and, being so, was beyond explanation. There was more mystery surrounding the man than the whole civil service and the army to boot were able to probe. His enemies said he was an out-and-out faking scoundrel, and that he only needed rope enough to hang

himself. His friends, on the contrary, swore that he was the straightest, whitest, best good fellow in the Presidency. He was quite commonly known as Prince Ager Mirza, and I believe that his title was a true one.

His only visible means of support was gambling in its various forms, from card-sharping to backing his superb Arabs in the different meets of the season. No direct charge of crookedness was ever brought against him; but when every dirty, disreputable fakir in the city—aye, and in the country, too, for miles around—claimed to be akin to Prince Mirza and to be under his protection, and when he laughingly admitted the claims of "his people," as he called them—well, of course, His Highness was liable to misconception.

That Dicky should cotton to a man like this was beyond me. Of course, it might have been his liver or the sun—fellows do cut up some queer shines with a well-baked liver. Anyway, when I ran down to Bombay I found Mirza and Dick running in harness together, and a more incongruous pair it would be hard to find.

Dicky was to be found any fine race day

sitting in his friend's gayly painted cart watching his clever manipulation of the odds with curious admiration and occasionally backing Mirza's opinion for a couple of rupees, just to see if it was as clever as it looked. Then Mirza would sit, smoking, among his pillows and listen to Dicky's views of life with a gravity and interest that were almost ludicrous considering how utterly at variance they were with his own.

Whatever the cause of the strange collaboration, it proved what I often had been told about Mirza's wonderful magnetic power —that it was strong enough to win and hold any man that he ever needed. Not that he deliberately chose Slape for a dangerous undertaking—that came later. They met casually and were drawn together, both interested in a strong, new type, and a friendship, warm and disinterested, sprang up. This happened at the time when Mirza needed a stanch friend, and as he saw with amazement the man's utter single-mindedness and read his absurdly honest soul, he determined to try to win him for the bettering of both their fortunes. And, after much thought, he told his story and won Dicky from the very start.

Mirza was the son of the old King of Materdas and a French woman, who, despite her brains and beauty, had not been able to hold her royal husband—for there was little doubt that a ceremony had taken place—during that panicky time just before the mutiny. Exactly what influence had been brought to bear to counteract that of the woman will probably never be known, but the old man suddenly declared in favor of a native woman, and agreed to hand over his French wife and her child to the fanatics who were fanning the smouldering hatred that breathed in the land against everything white.

Now, the presumption is that the old gentleman gave his consort a hint as to how things lay, for certain papers relating to the marriage (which could not have been reached without his connivance) disappeared, and, together with the papers, the wonderful historic Star of Materdas was missing—the finest cluster of diamonds that ever pinned a Rajan turban; the star that every king had worn and handed down, or pinned himself upon his first born's brow, to show the world his lawful heir.

The city was in an uproar, and suspicion

naturally was directed against the Queen. The old King was powerless to protect her; but for a time she held her own against the clamoring crew, haughtily refusing to leave the city with her hated offspring. As for the papers and the star, if she had them, she hid them well, for no trace of them could be found nor any power invoked that would cause her to open her mouth concerning them.

And just then the voice and the message came flying through the land and lighted the awful hell-born fires that raged so long and direly; and the body of the Queen was found in the old Temple of Han, with a priceless wine cup clutched in her hand, from which still trickled a few drops of a poison so rare that even the old Jain priest was at fault as to its origin. Whether it was murder or suicide was never clearly established, but from the triumphant smile that lingered on the face of the dead Queen one might judge that she had not passed out till she had accomplished her work, and then passed gladly.

In the stormy time that followed, the child was flung to and fro like a shuttlecock, superstitious reverence for royal blood alone sav-

ing its life. At length one Bayda, a servant of the Queen, took a hand in the game, and, seizing the little one, fled to Calcutta and placed himself and his charge under the protection of the Viceroy.

Mirza had grown up with this old man in his service, but not until he reached full manhood himself did he hear a whisper of his secret, and not then till old Bayda lay a-dying. Then he spoke and told Mirza that the Queen had carried the star and the papers into the old temple by the passage from the royal zenana, and that before going she had given him a paper and sworn him to the service of the young prince. The paper he never had understood, and thought the message probably the impulse of a tortured, unstrung mind. Still, he had proved faithful to his trust, and now handed Mirza a slip of yellow parchment on which was faintly traced in Urdu the enigmatical sentence, "Out of the belly of wisdom cometh riches and honor."

Mirza had kept his old strip of parchment hidden away among his chief treasures for over ten years, believing that all he needed was a clue—probably a slight one—to explain the mysterious message; but it had never

come. He had questioned fakirs, pundits and priests alike concerning the famous Temple of Han, and had learned much, though the only thing that seemed to bear in any way on the message was the fact that the old temple was commonly known as the "House of Wisdom." He had long surmised that the "belly of wisdom" referred to the interior of the temple; but further than this he had utterly missed the clue that he sought.

His idea was for Dick to get a permit to make some archaeological studies in Materdas. This would practically give him the freedom of the city, and he could, if he chose, spend a month in the very "belly of wisdom" itself. He dare not go to Materdas himself, except in disguise, and certainly could not enter the temple without other influence than he possessed.

Now, when I say that Slape was poor and that there was a little girl waiting most patiently in a hot up-country station, it may, perhaps, serve to explain why our paragon embarked in what some might term a questionable undertaking. I confess, however, that my only criticism referred to Mirza's failure to let me into the game, too.

In due time the permit passed through the various departments, and the heads thereof nodded approvingly, "Ah, Slape to the front again? Good boy, Slape! Good boy!"

So these twain journeyed together to Materdas as master and man. Mirza had grown a pundit's beard, black and long, for the occasion, and traveled as Arkut Dhab, secretary and confidential servant to the bara scientific Sahib. While Slape, with his genuine hobby for antiques, naturally filled his part to perfection. Their credentials brought them an imposing reception in the old walled city, and they spent several days receiving and answering calls of ceremony; but at last they were free, and the city was practically at their mercy.

They commenced their investigations a long way from their objective point, and by the time they had worked round to the temple they had already met and made friends with the old Hindu priest Haddee, who personally made them welcome and showed them into the famous shrine.

They recognized at once that the temple had well earned its reputation. So long had the gospel of mystery and fear held sway that

the very air seemed heavy with its subtle vibrations. The whole place was utterly forbidding, and they found themselves following old Haddee's soft footsteps almost stealthily. The hideous carvings, just touched by the feeble, yellow lamp light, seemed to start out from the shadows, as if to arrest them; and when, at last, Haddee left and the echo of his going had died away, a chill sense of discomfort seized them and they gazed in questioning uneasiness at each other; then a bat swirled heavily past, and they started like two children frightened in the dark.

As they gazed up at one of the massive idols a dark, flat head was lifted, hissing, for a moment, then sank to rest again; and once a serpent uncoiled lazily from round a fluted pillar and slowly slipped away to some more shadowy resting place. That they were drowsy, torpid boas did not much lessen the horror of the place to the men, and they were glad to cut short their visit and get out into the sunshine once more.

At their next visit they set to work to make as thorough an inspection of the place as possible; but, although the shrine was better

lighted in their honor, still the pillars and carvings and heavy time-stained pedestals, together with all the weird, fantastic decoration, made lurking places for a thousand shadows that never were disturbed. The bats and flying foxes whirred among the fretted roof columns, and the torpid serpents eyed their approach with beady stare as they hung, coiled, from their various vantage points.

After a while, however, they grew somewhat used to their surroundings, and Slape began his investigations in a businesslike manner. Beginning with the idols, he used his wooden sounding mallet freely, in the hope of finding a cavity; but they all responded solidly enough to discourage the most earnest seeker.

He had, with a good deal of scrambling, reached the broad shoulders of the biggest and ugliest deity of them all—presumably the mighty Han himself—and was about to sound his ochre-colored jaws, when he started with a half-cry and almost lost his balance, for within a foot of his face, with its curved body apparently gliding through the darkness, was a huge, malignant-looking boa.

Its head was thrown back and the grewsome jaws were opened wide.

Slape would surely have fallen, but Mirza, who had been keeping watch, sprang like an active cat to his aid, his long knife gleaming over his friend's shoulder as he half-supported him. But the brute didn't come; it just stayed poised and oscillating, and Mirza caught the flickering oil lamp from the god's head and thrust it toward the snake, and then their scare was over, but not their astonishment, for the light flashed back a hundred glinting lines that fairly dazzled them; from the diamond eyes, till they seemed like bright living things; from the body too—that was ringed with jade and gold and set with many gems—the light came back a living flame, that shook and trembled as the serpent vibrated back and forth. It was one of the great snakes evidently, stuffed or embalmed, according to the custom, and suspended by delicate wires. These wires, being continually affected by the restless bats above, causing the sinuous movements that so easily deceived the senses.

For days they wandered round the gloomy old den, vainly seeking some clue to the dead

Queen's message. Here, with its quick more horrible than its dead, mystery reigned supreme and lent its shelter to a thousand secret things; and Mirza sighed and shook his head as he owned that with an army of carpenters he could hardly hope to find his own. And the big garlanded gods looked down in silent mockery on their hopeless search.

But just when despair seized them light came. Dick had been in the habit of taking notes and making sketches for his own and old Haddee's edification; and of an evening they would sit and talk with the smooth old Hindu, showing him their work, explaining it and asking questions about the various Hindu shrines, ever with the hope that some word of his might lead them to their heart's desire.

One night Slape asked him the origin of the temple's name of "Wisdom," and the blood went singing in their ears as they heard his reply:

"Wisdom, my fathers, was the first serpent who dwelt among us. There are many stories as to the time and manner of his coming—so many that I may not choose; but this

I know, Wisdom was in the temple while my uncle was yet a boy, and even then the time and method of his coming were faint and dim; and when the Wise One passed away—at the time of his greatest perfection—my uncle was an old, old man. Now, Wisdom came to thwart the work of an evil spirit, who, as a woman, possessed the late King. She died at the great god's feet one night, and the body of Wisdom laid beside her, for his work was done.

"And that same night, as my uncle was praying in the shrine, he saw a coal-black puma pass before his eyes and crouch by the dead serpent's body, which was even then laid out for the embalmers; and the puma watched beside it till the break of day and then vanished. It was undoubtedly the new body of Wisdom receiving the last breath of his serpent spirit. So then the body was embalmed and hung in honor, and the brazen Wisdom was carved upon the roof, and ever since Wisdom and Han have ruled together."

"And the black puma?" questioned Slape.

"Yes, Sahib, it is undoubtedly still in the temple. I myself have heard its purring breath as I prayed at night, and often has its

velvet footfall caught my ear as it followed me round and round the shrine. The others, Aguf and his brother—and once, I think, his brother's son—have at times seen its dark shadow, dim and indistinct, but unmistakeable; and once again they heard a snarl, but that was all."

"Were you not afraid?"

"At first, perhaps, till we found its presence was for good. You see, a mut-walla—drunkard—once broke in, and in the morning we found him dead—the sacrilegious dog!—and on his breast the mark of claws and in his throat. And the wonder of it spread, and now the gates stand open night and day, and Aguf and I sleep in peace, for my Lord, the puma, guards well the treasures of the shrine."

A week later Richard Slape, scientist, and his secretary, Arkut Dhab, bade farewell to their official friends at Materdas, and late the same afternoon were escorted some distance on their homeward journey by a jangling troop of native horse and a few of the head officials of the city. Then, after many protestations of good will, they were left to their own devices.

When the returning cavalcade was well out of sight these two gentlemen turned aside and rode off in the direction of a patch of jungle. From this same patch there emerged, a couple of hours later, two half-naked and altogether disreputable looking fakirs, who wandered off toward the city. These two worthies hired a couple of tough hill ponies toward nightfall, and that was the last recorded of them for several hours.

* * * * * * * * * *

"Now then, quick; in with you, old man! Now the door! B-r-r-r! How that bolt jars! So, Wisdom Sahib, we'll soon settle your little business! Oh, Dicky, what a scheme! To feed the great Wisdom on marriage certificates and prize jewels! I wonder what she wrapped them up in to tempt the wise one, eh, Dicky?" So Mirza rambled on in a low, chuckling whisper; but Slape was nervous and ill at ease, and finally turned on him sharply:

"Shut up and turn on the light, can't you? It's simply beastly walking in this hole," he added, apologetically. "Why, a fellow might tread on one of those frightful, impossible

brutes; besides, there might be something in that puma story, after all, and then——"

"Puma story!" snorted Mirza. "Why, you're as bad as a ryot (farmer), believing such rot. I'd bet a bag of gold mohrs the lying old villain made the whole fake up to save keeping watch. May his gods bless his dirty little soul!" he added, fervently.

"Well, I don't know, you know——"

"Oh, drop it Slape. Here, you shin up the god and rip the snake and I'll look out for your puma; and if he comes he'll find a live man anyway, not a dirty mut-walla. Bah! Hurry up, Slape!"

Dick was soon astride the big idol's shoulders with a dark lantern and a long knife with which to rip open the "belly of Wisdom." He drew the head toward him and began to saw and dig at the scaly skin, but the embalming process had so toughened the body that he made little impression. He was still twisting and cutting when a sudden chill seized him and he felt his flesh creeping with a sickening fear. He sat quite still, listening breathlessly. Whether it was some strange premonition of evil or he had really heard something to startle his senses he could not

tell; but the cold sweat broke out over him as he sat waiting for—he knew not what.

He turned in a moment, impatient at his sudden weakness, and was about to speak to Mirza when something in the man's attitude arrested him. He was leaning slightly forward, peering uneasily into the gloom, and Slape saw that he had drawn his knife and that the sinews in the hand that clutched it were tense and rigid. The whole figure was set and motionless, and Slape watched it and the gloom beyond with an absorbed fascination. Once his hand moved half-unconsciously as it closed on the butt of his revolver.

Somewhere deep in his subconsciousness he began to count "One, two, three," slowly and rhythmically, and when he reached the mystic seven, on the stillness fell a sudden, purring snarl.

Mirza made a wild spring for the pedestal, but quicker than thought a flying shadow sped through the gloom, and a great cat lighted full on his chest, bearing him backward and down with a horrible grinding crash.

For one awful moment Dicky clung with

his arms round the god's neck, faint and dizzy with fear, and then his nerve came back. Mirza was struggling furiously, and he could hear the panting, snarling breath of the puma and the fierce invectives of the man as he gripped his enemy's throat.

And then Slape reached the floor, his knife ringing out as it slipped from his hand and struck the old oak pedestal. There was no time to regain it, and he sprang quickly to the struggling mass. There was a metallic click, a pistol shot that sounded like the crack of doom and the great black brute fell away, while Mirza struggled free, and rose staggering, faint and bloody.

"Quick, Slape, for God's sake! That shot will rouse all—Ah, listen! They're here already. Quick and tear the brute down!"

Dick sprang up again and slashed at the wires in a perfect frenzy, till at last old Wisdom fell with a thud, scattering his jeweled bangles far and near; and Mirza seized him and bent and twisted till he forced the tortured body in his sack and knotted it securely.

But even then quick feet were hurrying over the flagged courtyard. They paused an

instant at the door, then it was shaken, and a loud voice called for help.

They stood for a moment in uncertainty, still panting from their exertion; then, right over their heads, the clang of the great alarm bell rang out with an iron clash, and a moment later came an echo, faint and far, and then another, till all the bells in the city seemed to be giving voice in one vast accusing clang.

Then the men broke for the door, with the precious bag swinging from Mirza's back. They crossed the inner court unhindered, but at the outer gate a crowd was already gathered. Torches were flaming, and old Haddee was urging the men into the inner court. They hung back, however, talking and gesticulating wildly as Haddee raved among them, first pleading, then heaping reproaches on their cowardly heads. But the fame of the black puma was greater than even the priest's power over them, and they would not cross the threshold, though every moment their numbers were augmented, as men—aye, and women, too, and children—came hurrying in answer to the wildly jangling bells.

And as they waited there came the rush of the spoilers' feet across the court, and the men closed in on the door to meet them, but the next moment fell back before the wild rush of a half-naked fakir, who sprang, screaming, into the circle of torchlight. His face was bloody and terrible, and something shapeless clung about his back and round his throat, despite his apparent efforts to shake it off.

As he sprang through the gates he shrieked aloud, swinging his long Afghan knife wildly: "Bhood! Bhood! Sheitan ke butcha kabadar!" ("The Devil! The Devil! Beware the son of the evil one!") And snatching the nearest torch, he dashed it wildly here and there in the face of the startled crowd, who gave way right and left before his fierce springs. The bag, too, seemed a thing of life in the shifting, uncertain light—a thing that was clutching at his throat, and a cry went up: "The puma! The black puma!" and they broke in every direction, the women and children screaming with terror as Mirza, followed by Slape, dashed through them.

Five minutes later came the rattle of horses' hoofs along the Nulspur road, but they soon

grew faint and died away; and then, one by one, the jangling bells were hushed and the men slunk home, with many a backward glance of fear.

And the story is told in Materdas how Sheitan came in the form of a fakir, and how the black puma had driven him out of the temple, and that they had ridden; fighting and screaming, out into the wilderness on a horse that sprang from the earth at the evil one's call. There were those who said that another devil besides this particular one had run from the temple, too, and had ridden away behind his master, but these were in a minority.

Meantime "Sheitan" and his friend effected a rapid change of costume in the friendly patch of jungle, and astride of their own heavy hunters, they made a record for cross-country riding that would have opened the eyes of the members of the Bombay Gymkana, and they can ride a bit themseves, too. They struck the railroad at a point where the early morning express stops for water, and ten minutes later were rattling away for Bombay.

The next week Slape reported for duty, but

it was many a long day before I got the story of their raid. About the contents of Wisdom's belly they kept tight mouths to the end, swearing that it was a fake, after all, and that the brute was stuffed with sawdust. This may be, but within six months the patient little girl was married, and shortly after Slape left the service and set up a laboratory of his own.

And Mirza? Well, Mirza blossomed out into greater magnificence than ever, and at a grand durbar at the Government House I saw a certain high official single him out for special courtesy, and I heard, actually heard him call his guest—Prince Ager Mirza.

There are those who go so far as to say that had Mirza's mother been English instead of French the present King might not rule at Materdas to-day.

CHAPTER III.

The House in The Lal Bazaar.

I was lounging lazily on the promenade at the old "Fort" bandstand one afternoon, listening to the music and absorbing, together with my Trinchinopoly, the wondrous wealth of form and color that makes this particular promenade, at bandtime, a picture so charming, so vital and withal so bizarre as to place it far ahead of anything the Occident can produce. What other driveway of the world can boast such a decorative setting of sea and headland, of tall, windy palms that mass the background, breaking here and there with views of distant green, of low, graceful buildings with pillared logias wreathed in trailing vines—a fitting stage indeed for such a pagent.

See now! There goes a Rajput prince, the syces clearing the way for his silver-harnessed horses; and, galloping in a crescent back of his carriage, come his grim-faced Indian

lanciers—soldiers every man of them, with their neat Karkee uniforms, gold-fringed turbans and clanking tulwars, their scarlet pennons fluttering from the tips of their lances adding another splash to the riot of color. And the haughty looking gentleman on the long tailed horse is an Arab sheik, and that striped yellow shawl is the famous "kafeeya" of his race.

Then comes a man in English-cut clothes, wearing a white turban and driving tandem from the top of a high two-wheeler—the Rajah of Nagpore. And the fat man in the elegant victoria, who looks like a Jew, is the great Sir Jamsetjee Jeejiboy himself—the most important Parsee of them all. And so on through the whole motley throng, carriage loads of silk-clad Parsee ladies, gazing out of their great languid eyes with just a touch of scorn at "hoi-polloi." Mussulman and Hindoo merchants, black-mitred Parsee students, wandering, book in hand; and now and again a merry crowd of dusky girls go laughing past in the brightly painted bullock gharrie, garlands of jasmine crowning the girls and beasts alike.

And the warm glow of the setting sun

touches it all to crimson and gold and falls aslant on the swaying palms that bend to the breeze that fans them with a loverlike caress. And by-and-by the sun changes from gold to red, grows misty, hangs awhile, then sinks—a fiery ball below the quivering rim of the Arabian Gulf. And as it sinks it seems to draw our hearts and we turn our eyes and watch it go in silence.

I turned to go with the rest and was just crossing the drive when a horse, the leader of a tandem, was pulled up so suddenly at my shoulder that I sprang aside in some fright, and was just swearing at the driver when a syce ran round and collared the prancing leader, at the same time grinning and salaaming at me, while a voice called from the cart: "Hullo; Jack! Jump up, quick, old man; the brutes won't stand. There, that's right! Let her go, Sarki!" and before I had time to realize it I was being tooled back through the city by the prettiest whip in the whole Presidency—Ager Mirza.

"Well, and how is the Hakheem Sahib? Here, throw that evil weed away and smoke a decent cigar, like a Christian."

"The Hakheem Sahib is certainly none the

better for being pawed by that horse of yours, and as for the cigar—— Here, where are we going, anyway? This isn't Byculla!"

"No, thank the gods, it's not exactly Byculla, close as it is; but it soon will be Malabar Hill—short cut you see; and Hakheem Sahib, whither I go thou goest also, or I'll know the reason why. No; jesting apart, I've been chasing you all the afternoon. Went to the hospital, and Phipps said you had gone to the Fort; went to the Fort and nearly got arrested for reckless driving—all for the pleasure of having your company at dinner to-night."

"But——" I began to expostulate.

"Oh, that's all right," he interrupted, airily, "I fixed Phipps—good fellow, Phipps! He'll watch out if the Surgeon General turns up, and swear it's cholera morbus."

So I held my peace, the more resignedly, perhaps, because I knew just what a delicious little dinner was in store for me. I had not seen Mirza since his return from Europe, and was eager to have a good long evening with him—it was always so well worth while. We turned into the compound at length and were welcomed by the dogs before we were

half way to the house. Abdulla, the fat Mahometan butler, was at the door, and ten minutes later we were discussing our venison.

I had not attempted to question Mirza as to his sudden and overpowering desire for my company. I knew him too well, and sat stolidly puffing at my cigar and drinking the excellent coffee that Abdulla kept supplying. The dinner had been after my own heart, the wines just cool enough, and my favorite brand, too. So, in an attitude of quiet content, I smoked on, lazily waiting for my host to spring his little petard; but when he did so I confess I was considerably astonished—it came so suddenly.

"What's catalepsy, Doc?"

"Catalepsy! How the devil do I know?"

"Oh, excuse me, old man; I could hardly expect it, you know; but I thought it might be in your line."

"What d'ye want to know for, anyway? Feel the symptoms of an attack coming on?"

"Don't be an idiot, Jack. Tell me what you know about it. Have you seen many cases in your work?"

"Sixty or seventy, I suppose. But nervous

diseases are always difficult to explain to a layman, even if one understands them oneself. You can't demonstrate catalepsy like a cold in the head, you know. But, to put it roughly, it's an affection of the nervous system closely allied to hysteria, which manifests itself only in peculiarly organized subjects. So far it is comparatively easy sailing, but there are complications that baffle the best of us."

"For instance?"

"Well, the subject is liable to go into a state of trance where there is an undoubted exaltation of the mental faculties, and in some cases there are well-marked phenomena which are simply inexplainable from any rational basis."

"You've undoubtedly seen some of the miracle workers of this place. Does this same catalepsy explain their power, too?"

"To save my life, I can't say. I examined a fakir once, and would have staked my reputation that he was dead. I gave him an electric shock that would have stirred him even had he been dead; yet ten minutes later, when I had got quite through with him, he came twisting and shivering back to life, and

after a few weak movements he got his strength again, and, wrapping his few filthy rags about him, he stalked away with the dignity of a lord of creation. No, I don't attempt to diagnose such cases as that."

"So! Well, I want you to come with me and visit a subject, as you call 'em, tonight. There's a woman, a foreigner—Egyptian, I think—in the Lal Bazaar. She sent me a message—a strange one—to the effect that a dead fakir was crying to me for vengeance, and that if I would go to her she would call him out from the shadows—whatever that may mean—and let him explain himself. Of course, you know how all these rascals look on me as a kind of protector; also that to some extent I acknowledge the claim, finding their services extremely useful on occasions. Now, to one of these fellows—a man I felt sure of—I intrusted a commission—a most delicate and important one. He was to carry to an agent of mine in Lahore a small signet ring and receive from him a package for me. I will not trouble to tell you the contents of the package, but will only say that they were absolutely valueless to any one except myself; that is," he added, suddenly, frowning,

as if the thought were new and unpleasantly suggestive, "unless—unless——" He did not finish the sentence; but, rising hastily, passed in through the French windows to his sitting room.

He was away perhaps ten minutes, and when he returned his face was still dark and troubled. "Anything wrong?" I asked.

"I don't know. I can't tell. I had some papers in a certain drawer. They are still there, and it may be all right. The drawer was secret, and the men of my house are my friends. Still, I could have sworn they were placed in a different order. Well," he added, "they are there, anyway, and that's the principal thing at present. I'll satisfy myself about them later."

After a while he took up his story again "As I was saying, I sent this man to Lahore. The express leaves at midnight, and he should have reported there late the second day after. Yet this is the sixth day, and nothing has been seen of him. Of course, I have wired my agents and men are on the watch at a hundred city gates while they peddle their wares, but so far with no result. Now you see the significance of this Egyptian's mes-

sage, which came this morning. Under any other conditions I should have declined to go, and, indeed, had almost done so, when I remembered that Slape had told me about a year ago that you were poking into somnambulism and things. So I changed my mind and determined to go, anyway, if I could get you along."

"Of course I'll go willingly, though I don't see what earthly use I'll be," I added, doubtfully.

"Well, I don't know; but, perhaps, you may be able to tell if the thing is genuine or not. You see, I don't know anything about these things, despite my father's blood."

"All right, old man, I'll go," said I. Then added: "You say the matter is of great importance?" for I was curious at seeing him so disturbed.

"Importance!" he echoed. "If ever they get the combination of my Lahore package and the papers in my desk at Materdas I might as well go and hang myself at once. I have some very dear friends in that city, as you know."

And then he sat brooding. And I, remembering the story of his mother's tragic end

and the mystery of his life, held my peace.

It was dark as we set out, and one of Mirza's men preceded us with a lantern till we reached the brighter ways of the bazaar, where we dismissed him.

The Lal bazaar is not the easiest place to traverse even in the daylight; its narrow, tortuous streets leading as often as not to an impassable mud wall or possibly ending abruptly in a cow shed. Huge rats scurry about the dark alleys with a peculiar guttural snarl; great black shapes rise from the earth at your feet and stumble clumsily away, their bells alone proclaiming them to be the familiar buffalo. Mirza, however, threaded his way through the darkest alleys quickly and easily, while I stumbled along close behind him.

At last we came to a high blank wall, and some thirty feet along it to a closed door. Mirza rapped twice, then thrice in rapid succession, and almost immediately the door swung in and we entered a narrow passage or alley, for I saw the stars shining far above us. There was the usual bracket, with its oil cup and little burning wick, the light from which was making a futile struggle with the

darkness. We stood waiting a moment, then a window opened in the wall above us and a woman—a negress—looked out and demanded our business. Mirza replied to her in some jargon that I did not understand. She drew back, closing the window after her, and we waited again till a light appeared further along the passage and the woman beckoned us forward.

We followed her up a narrow stairway and into an ill-lighted room, where we had another wait for some few minutes. Then the purdah at the end of the room was drawn back and once more the old negress beckoned us to enter and dropped the curtain behind us.

For an instant I was completely bewildered, although from my trips in the native quarter with Mirza I should have been better prepared; but the whole of our little adventure had been so sordid and seemed to lie in such utterly mean places that my surprise was excusable. The light fell softly from several perfumed lamps—so softly that it seemed to tint rather than light, suggest rather than make plain the furnishing of the room we entered.

Our feet sank in the rugs that strewed the floor, and we both paused a moment in genuine admiration of the artistic effect of the room. The rare old tapestries, with their rich wine tints; the great Egyptian vases and curious carvings; the glowing censer, half-hidden in a perfumed cloud; the divans with their royal trappings; and last, and perhaps most wonderful, the great crystal that stood on its carved pedestal in the centre of the room and seemed to pulse and beat with a vital, rosy flame. As we stood, a dog—a shaggy wolfhound—came stretching lazily across the rugs to us, and, after a few investigating sniffs, turned back again; and as our eyes followed him we saw a movement among the pillows of a divan. Two naked arms were stretched out lazily, there was a yawn and then a laughing voice bid us welcome.

I have often tried to describe Narda, but I always fail. I can shut my eyes and she rises up out of the past, clear and distinct. I can remember the tones of her voice, the subtle perfume of her hair, the details of her garb, from the coiled snake that held her hair to the gold fillet that bound her sandals; but

when I try to picture the woman herself she seems to draw away and mock me, and then I forgot my task and find myself looking into the half-closed eyes as I used to look in bygone days, and wondering, as I used to wonder, if they really had a hidden meaning, and, if so, what it was. And then I wake and stretch and yawn exactly as I used to do, and half expect to hear her mocking laugh that taunted me with yielding to her spell of sleep. But no! This is not Egypt or Bombay—just London, and a part of it called Holborn—christened "High," and the fire and my pipe are cold and dead, and the set furniture seems to grow stiffer still as my lips linger a moment fondly over her name.

Mirza advanced and stood talking with her, while I stood, staring rudely, I'm afraid, till he introduced me, and then she said: "Yes, I expected him, and you could not have come without him." And when Mirza looked puzzled she added: "Not only that, but I could not have sent for you till it was time for us to meet. I know you both, and we shall meet often in the future, and—— Ah! the gods are impatient. Watch and do not speak."

Turning at her words and following her

outstretched hand, we saw the crystal changing from rose to opal, then pulsing quickly back again; and then it seemed as if a spring of flame suddenly shot up from its cloudy heart and poured over its rim in waves of molten fire. After a moment this ceased and the glass grew cloudy; then slowly out of the cloud a picture began to form, though whether it was in the crystal or in the air between it and us I could not tell. Gradually it evolved as we stood watching, and at last grew firm and distinct, as sharp as a photograph, or, rather, as the picture of a camera obscura, and we both uttered an exclamation as we recognized a corner of Mirza's sitting room, the den that I knew almost as well as my own.

The whole room was there, for in a distant corner I could see Jo, Mirza's fox terrier, sleeping on a cane lounge; but it was in half-darkness, while the corner nearest us was in the full rays of a burning lamp that stood on a bracket close to my friend's desk. As we gazed the door opened and Abdulla entered. He peered uneasily around, then closed and locked the door and came sidling up to the desk, pased a moment, then opened it; and,

after a little fumbling, drew out a dark flat case; and as he did so I heard Mirza draw in a long breath and his fingers gripped my arm till I came near screaming.

Then the man in the picture started violently, and we saw Jo, the terrier, come growling across the room, the bristles on his spine showing in a stiff ridge. Abdulla made a motion to drive him away (I remembered then that the two had never been friends); but Jo, after feinting to run, sprang at the fellow's sari, tearing it away, and then, fixing his teeth in the brown leg, began to tear fiercely at it.

We could see that Abdulla was howling with pain, although the play was all pantomime; but the next moment he leaned over and grasped poor Jo by the throat. The dog made a game struggle, tearing and biting, but the man got him on the floor, and his hands and knees soon did the work even as we two men, who loved the little one, stood impotently by. Then the fellow moved to the door, with the limp little body in his arms. He walked with evident pain and haltingly, and at the door put the dog down and bound his torn sari round the bite.

The picture moved now for all the world as if a strong wind had ruffled it, and the next moment we were out in the compound, among the shrubbery, and there we saw Abdulla bury his victim and then creep stealthily away. That was all, and the next moment the fire came tearing through the crystal again, as though anxious to burn away the memory of a foul deed.

Mirza sank down on the lounge, with a face showing white and set under the tan, and I saw that his eyes were wet, while, to his lasting honor, he thought of his friend before his foe. "Poor little Jo!" he murmured, brokenly. "Poor little Jo!"

Then Narda's hand fell on his shoulder. "Would you see him once again, my lord?" she asked.

"Can you do this?" he murmured, hoarsely.

"Wait and see!"

She rose and walked back and forth several times, moving her hands gropingly, while we sat and watched her. Then she stopped suddenly and flung out her rounded arm forbiddingly, muttering: "No, not you! Not yet! Wait!" But the next instant fell back, crying, "Well, then——come!"

I felt my spine creeping and a cold sweat break on my forehead as we sat glaring into the shadowy draperies; and then just how it happened I could not see for my horror, but the shadows seemed to rise and mass themselves, to toss and heave and then take shape and form, and a man came tottering forth, with his hand to his throat and the blood oozing through. And Mirza sprang up with a look of awful horror on his face and a harsh muttering in his throat as the man came on. Then he cried, hoarsely, "Ramin Dhat!" The man came close up and fell on his knees before him, making pitiful efforts to speak, and for a while could not.

But at last, with a great effort, he rose, and his voice came in a harsh, guttural cry: "Vengeance, my lord! Vengeance!" and fell prone on his face at his master's feet.

Mirza stood rigid, hardly seeming to breathe; while I, recovering something of my nerve, knelt beside the form. It was twitching and jerking in a horrible manner; but as I touched it it rose slowly to its knees and pointed to the wounded throat and then to the stomach, making signs that I could not understand, but finally ceased and pointed at

the crystal, which was working again. And there we saw the whole tragedy. The man Ramin Dhat walking down the hill, and following him Abdulla and another; they join him and talk a while; then there is a struggle. Ramin breaks and runs, and as he does so his hand goes to his mouth; but they soon catch him; he is thrown heavily and there comes the downward flash of a knife, and we see that the arm that drives it is scarred to the elbow. Then the light goes out of the crystal once more, and we turn again to the man, but he is gone. How? When? Where? God knows, and I believe He only.

We did not see poor little Jo. We were both too utterly sick in brain and body to wait, but hurried out into the cool night air, and I felt like shrieking, but Mirza strode on, grim and silent. At the foot of the hill he paused, and, holding out his hand, said: "Forgive me, but we had best part here. Good night."

"But why?" I cried. "What are you going to do?"

"My duty," he answered, sternly. "Good night."

I was hardly likely to sleep that night, and,

after tossing for an hour or so, I dressed again and went across the garden to the hospital. The casuals' ward is on the ground floor to the right as you enter, and as I was passing it two hammals came out with a stretcher.

"Who is it?" I asked, raising the sheet. It was Ramin Dhat.

I think somehow I must have known it before I saw him, as I did not even start, but quietly ordered the body to the dissecting room, where I followed it.

On inquiry I heard that the man had been found at the foot of the hill where we had seen the pictured struggle and brought to the hospital five or six days before. The wound in his throat had been beyond the possibility of cure, but he had lingered on unconscious till about half an hour before I had come in that same night, so that he was alive at the time of our strange encounter in the house in the Lal Bazaar.

From the actions of the man in the picture I had formed certain suspicions about the lost ring, and they proved correct. He had swallowed the ring during his short dash for liberty, and after some little trouble, details

of which I need not relate, I got it back for Mirza.

A few weeks later two men were brought into the casuals' ward, and I was sent for immediately. They were mutilated past recognition, though care had evidently been taken to avoid mortal wounds. They were in the hospital for fully a year before recovering. Meanwhile all efforts of the police to discover their assailants were vain, the men themselves keeping the most obstinate silence. On the hospital blotter, among the identification marks, were a newly healed scar on the one man's calf and on the other man's arm, a scar reaching from the wrist to the elbow.

CHAPTER IV.

Out Of His Class.

It was shortly after my first visit to the house in the Lal Bazaar that a very curious case came under my observation which seemed to show that the gods were still alive and quite as difficult of comprehension as ever. It all came out of the trouble the monkey had with the crow. The crow was one of the usual big, bold ruffians that are conspicuous by their size and audacity all over the Indian Empire. Why they should have been deified by the Parsee is beyond conception, as they are probably the worst scalawags of their size in the country. This particular specimen was camping out one hot afternoon in the sal tree that shaded Marshall's veranda.

The monkey—Peter by name—was a little brown imp with a curly tail, the familiar of the bungalow and the despair of Abdulla Din, the chief cook and bottle-washer, whose prin-

cipal duty was to keep him out of mischief.

It was the habit of Peter, by the grace of Abdulla, to dine twice daily under the shady sal tree, and it was during these meals that he had learned to hate crow with an unholy hate. He could not nap for a moment during a meal but he was sure to wake with a start at the flapping of wings, just in time to see a great black thing whirring up into the tree. Of course his best bone was gone, and all that he could do would be to sit and pull faces and use doubtful language, while his enemy picked the bone with many a derisive "caw."

Although Peter was game to the core, he realized after several encounters that he couldn't afford to give away weight to the crows. Their beaks were too hard and sharp; they would swoop on him suddenly from behind, give one vicious dig and away ere he could turn and retaliate. So, though he was more than ready to tackle a cobra, or even a stray bandakoot if necessary, he began to look askance at the crows.

On this particular afternoon Marshall was lying on his cot at the open window, a few yards from where Peter was discussing his

supper. After a few mouthfuls of rice the monkey took up a tempting looking bone and dallied with it languidly for awhile, glancing surreptitiously up into the tree meantime. Then he sat, apparently thinking hard for a few moments. Marshall declares that he then turned and deliberately closed one eye in his direction but that probably is fiction—anyway, he laid the bone down and himself with it, his eyes closed drowsily, and in a moment to all seeming he was fast asleep.

Of course, the crow up in the tree was waiting for this; yet he hesitated (possibly he had seen the monkey's wink); then, contrary to his usual custom, he gave a loud challenging "caw!" and an instant later another. These unusual demonstrations must have taxed Peter's nerves considerably; but he remained immovable. The crow hopped to one of the lower branches and tried again; this failing to stir the monkey, the deified one lighted gingerly on the ground, eyeing the situation still suspiciously, with head cocked first this side, then that.

The bone certainly was very close to the monkey, but—well—— Getting a sudden

spasm of courage, he made a long, low, feet-forward dive at it. The same instant Peter dived, too, also feet forward and head held back well out of range. They met with a thud, and Peter, burying his four paws in the birds feathers, put all his pent up hatred into one vicious tug, then sprang back and away over the veranda railing, lighting on the cot beside Marshall, chattering and grinning and waving aloft the enemy's feathers exultingly.

His triumph was short lived, for the demoralized bird recovered and made a sudden dash for the window, bent on vengeance; but he halted at the sill on catching sight of Marshall, who, however, was so convulsed with laughter that he could not have interfered if he would.

Peter, seeing his place of sanctuary invaded so boldly by the avenger, promptly turned tail and fled, dropping his trophies as he went. He reached the top of the door at the first scramble and then landed with a flying leap up among the rafters. His jump disturbed the dust, and something else.

It fell straight and true to the nose of the laughing man below, changing his laughter to a howl of pain and anger.

A boot went flying at the sacred one and some fluent vernacular at Peter, and then the man turned to find out what had hit him.

"Hey, boy! Abdulla Din, I say! Hey! you son of an owl!" His nose was very painful. "Hither aow! Come here!"

"Ache, sahib," answered the Mahometan, entering on the instant and bowing at the door.

"Here! What's this, eh? Where did it come from, you rascal? What is it?"

Did the man's face stiffen slightly as his eyes fell on the object Marshall held? If so, his master did not remark it, but continued turning the thing over curiously. It was a small, dark ball, apparently of jade, and covered with a delicate network of silver filigree; a pretty toy, if such it could be called. Fortunately, it had fallen from his nose to the cot instead of the floor, and so was uninjured.

He looked up and straight into the khansamah's eyes as the man answered his rough questioning, and a sudden feeling of distrust and repugnance took the place of his anger as the fellow spoke smoothly:

"Sahib, I know not. I cannot rightly see; but if the sahib will show——" stretching out

his hand. And then he paused, for the sahib was looking at him with a curling lip.

For the space of ten seconds the two men stood, each weighing the other. And Peter sat above, watching them with an anxious face. Then Marshall spoke:

"So? Then it does not matter. I will keep it and see if the police sahib knows of it, in case it is, as I suspect, stolen property. Now go."

That night a storm, the first of the monsoons, blew up chill, and hearing Peter chattering and moaning on the veranda, Marshall opened the window and let him in, to the little fellow's huge delight. He made him up a nest on the floor at the foot of the cot, and then turned in himself and soon was fast asleep.

Just at that hour before dawn when the night is chilliest he woke with a start, aroused by a piercing shriek.

"Ca hai! what is it? Who's there?" he challenged, staring out into the dark room, while his hand groped for his revolver. There was no answer save the moans of the monkey. He thought, on first starting up, he had seen something white melting from the foot

of the bed toward the door; but, being half asleep, could not be sure. The monkey came limping to him for sympathy when he struck a light, and he saw that the little paw held up for his inspection was crushed and badly bruised, for all the world as if it had been trodden on.

The next morning Peter's attitude toward Abdulla was one of impotent malice. From one coign of vantage and another he chattered and gibed and mowed, a picture of nervous hate. Marshall might have found food for reflection in this had he not been so engrossed in his morning mail as to be oblivious to all else. There was an order from the surgeon general to proceed to Bombay by the night express and report immediately for emergency duty at the Byculla hospital. And so the luck began to work.

That night Abdulla—having received his discharge with quiet indifference—also left for Bombay, herding with a crowd of low caste natives on the floor of a fourth-class carriage in the same train as his late master. He had shaved off his big, black beard, leaving only a fierce mustache. With this and one or two minor changes of costume the sleek khansa-

mah had vanished utterly, leaving in his place as truculent looking a border man as one would wish to see.

It was during the journey to Bombay that Marshall discovered that the charm which had come to him so strangely possessed puzzling properties. He was toying with the trinket when he found that it unscrewed from the centre, and the interior revealed what at first he took to be a large diamond; but while examining it he noticed, to his astonishment, that it began to cloud, and then to clear, and then to cloud again as though from some inner pulse. Later he found by experiment that these pulses were in some subtle manner in direct sympathy with his own mental state while he held the stone. Again, he noted that the color of the stone changed upon occasion from clear crystal to blood red, and at these times the pulse grew fast—so fast that the interior seemed like an angry, boiling caldron, and he could not help noticing that at such times his own mentality was, from some cause, similarly disturbed. Not unnaturally, he arrived at the conclusion that the stone had in some manner been sensitized so as to take impressions from the

nearest mental magnetism. And then, not being interested in psychic things, he put the charm away in an old cabinet, and in his waking hours, at least, forgot it.

In his sleep, however, it was different. He seemed at this time to dream all the evil dreams that imagination could evolve, and the climax ever was the little jade case with its pulsing crystal, till he learned, when all escape seemed cut off and just before utter despair seized him, to look to the help which it brought always.

He was clinging one night to a rock in a whirling storm of wind and rushing waters. A gull, swept before the howling gale, was caught, and it's drowned body tossed high on the crest of a monster sea. The sky and the sea met before his eyes. He heard them roar and hiss at him. He knew the end was near, and yet he found himself listening; and his ear caught a bubbling sound beneath the din of surges, and as they closed over him they changed from slate to gold and then to crimson, and it was the inner pulse of the crystal and to its soothing lullaby he slept peacefully and without fear.

Marshall was at the time of the transfer to

Bombay just an Indian army assistant apothecary, drawing seventy-five rupees per month in an up country station. He was white, of English parents and a fine shot, otherwise in no way different from the thousands of others of the same ilk. His ambitions had been simply nil outside of his shikarri work; at that he had made a reputation second to none in the Empire.

But once in Bombay he seemed to awaken suddenly. He became indefatigable. After his hospital work—and it was anything but light—he took up his medical studies where he had dropped them and read his way steadily up, passing his final exams. with infinite credit. Then he took up special lines in medical and civil service affairs. He developed naturally. Yet he had unusual success. In five years he was a man whom people noted as a person of mark, and other men of achievement began to seek him out and to show their appreciation of his ability.

It was about this time that Slape and he met—at some scientific society, I believe—and, discovering that they had interests in common, they joined forces in chemical problems that both were investigating. Later

Mirza and I met him and we fraternized. So it happened that one evening we were smoking in his comfortable library. We had not been there long when Slape turned up—he always does when there's anything good on.

He was chock-full of a new experiment, as usual, and for the next half hour the air grew heavy with chemical symbols such as: "Yes, I got the salt from $H_2SO_4xBa"O_2H_2=BaSO_4 x_2OH_2$."

"Ah, yes! I see; your acid reacting on the base."

Then they argued as to the basic or acid character of the properties of the oxides of an element, Marshall holding up his end of the argument in a fashion that inspired respect.

It must have been fearfully dry work for Mirza; but he sat smoking with a face full of apparent interest, and even seemed disappointed when I howled at the men to shut up and give us a chance."

Marshall laughed and went to the sideboard, saying: "Here, you chaps! Here's a thing I want you to see, and I'll bet it's a chemical problem that even Dicky here can't solve." And he rolled the little jade ball on the table.

I took the thing up first and examined it curiously, then as our host called out "Twist it, Sutton!" I twisted, and, opening the case, saw the strange stone. I gave a gasp as the others bent over me. "A diamond! Here, you fellows! Don't breathe on it. Confound you, I can't see it!" And while I tried to rub the mist away, Marshall chuckled and finally burst into a roar as he saw my blank face when I failed.

Then we heard the story of how he had got the stone, and, suspecting his servant, had gone to the police, but had failed to hear anything of its owner, and so finally had kept it until he had grown attached to it.

While he was talking Slape was studying the crystal carefully, sometimes bending down over it as if to hide it from the rest of us. When Marshall finished, he asked abruptly: "After you got it, what happened?"

Marshall looked puzzled a moment. "Happened?" he echoed at length. "I don't quite understand. Nothing that I recollect. I came to Bombay the next night, if I remember rightly."

"So! You were in the subordinate medical department then, with no ambitions and

no prospects, eh?" Marshall nodded, evidently wondering what he was driving at. "And now," continued Dick, "I call on these two chaps to witness there's not a fellow in the department that's not either proud or jealous of you. You've risen from a rank outsider—no offense, more honor to you—to be a house surgeon to your own college hospital; you've written a book on Thanatophidia that bids fair to be our college textbook; it's certainly opened my eyes about snake bites, though where on earth you got your data beats me altogether. You've got this far in five years, with no favor, and the promise is that in five more you'll be one of the biggest medical guns in the country or——"

"Well?" questioned his host, seeing he had stopped suddenly.

"Never mind, old man; but remember your luck began the day you found this thing. Take care you don't lose it. There's many a man would sell his soul for the bare chance of stealing it; and they wouldn't be all natives either. And remember another thing. It's the fashion nowadays to steal such things, so don't trust anybody. You can't tell what's slumbering down in your best friend's soul."

He spoke so solemnly that we were all a little startled. Mirza was the first to break the rather awkward silence.

"What is it, Dick?"

Dick handed him the stone, that was pulsing like a living thing. I saw Mirza's dark face pale as it lay in his hands, then his lips moved slightly, and he walked over the room to Marshall, handing him the crystal, and saying as he bowed gravely:

"You will pardon me for adding my word to his. He is right. I, as you know, am supposed to be rich. I am a Rajput prince, heir to one of the oldest thrones in the world —an exile, it is true, but still envied by most. I love my life and the ways of it, yet I tell you that I would willingly give up all—my name and my hopes and my power—to stand alone and naked in the world with only that in the palm of my hand." He paused and looked earnestly at Marshall for a moment. Then he added: "You cannot understand these things. Your temperament is not quite as ours. But it does not matter so long as you keep your charm. You will fill up the measure of your possibilities whatever they may be; more no man can do,

though his stars work ever so strongly."

Just how much impressed Marshall was by all this I couldn't tell. For my part I always had thought Mirza and Slape were a bit too eager on such things to be quite trustworthy, and Marshall hardly can be blamed for thinking the same. Probably he realized how hard he had worked for success, and to have the credit given to a trumpery external possession must have been trying.

Slape told me afterward that it was a divining glass of the rarest kind, infinitely superior to the great crystal of Narda, the Egyptian; and that there was a wonderful future before Marshall if he only held on to it.

A year later Marshall volunteered for the front in the last Afghan trouble and there won the Victoria Cross for conspicuous bravery under fire. Later he was promoted to acting surgeon major, and at this time Slape received a letter and a package from him. The package contained the jade ball in a little leather case, and the letter said that as Slape thought the trinket valuable he had inclosed it for his care, as the fighting was pretty rough and he might go under and lose it; and, besides, he was tired of thinking

that possibly he owed his success to anything but his own efforts, and so he intended to show his friends that he could float alone.

Slape showed me the letter and then made me go with him to the safety deposit vaults and see the case locked in a fire and thief proof cell. As he turned away he said abruptly, "Now, watch out!"

In the next report from the front we read, "Acting Surgeon Major Marshall badly wounded." Then followed a glowing account of the work of a sepoy who had brought the doctor in under fire, saving his life and getting him safely back to the rear.

"See how it works?" growled Slape. But for the life of me I couldn't; the luck was as good in saving him as it was bad in getting him bowled over. Besides, I was sick of Slape's harping on "luck." If ever a man earned his spurs worthily it was Marshall.

He came down on sick leave. He had had a pretty close call. An Afghan knife had carved his helmet and then, fortunately, had slipped on his skull, leaving, nevertheless, an ugly scalp wound and jarring the brain, so that he dropped as though he had been shot in his tracks. Fever and exposure had done

the rest, and he contemplated a long rest before he got in harness again.

He had brought with him the man who had saved his life, and to our astonishment we heard that it was Abdulla Din, his old khansamah. He had enlisted at the beginning of the trouble. and, strangely enough, had been in the same skirmish with his old master. I saw him the first day I called and was anything but favorably impressed. Still, it's pretty hard to diagnose an Afghan.

Slape returned the crystal at the first opportunity and tried to point a moral from the wound; but I don't think he succeeded well, as his temper was short for some time after when we referred to Marshall.

Of course, the man with the Victoria Cross was a big man indeed, and for a while, after he got stronger, we lost sight of him in the social whirl. Then the news of his engagement to a certain commissioner's daughter nearly took our breath away. She was a star in the firmament of Viceregal society, and her dot was mentioned with a breath of awe. "See how it works?" said Slape, and I did begin to waver.

Soon after the announcement we saw her.

It was at the engagement ball, and she wore at her waist a curious little jade ball, artistically netted with silver filigree. It was a pretty ornament and much admired by the guests who noticed it.

That was the beginning of the end. Two days afterward Abdulla Din, Marshall's trusted bearer, called with a note purporting to come from his master and delivered the same with many salaams to the girl. The note was a clever forgery, and he received in return for it a little sealed packet, with many injunctions to be careful not to lose it. He was most careful—so careful, in fact, that it's doubtful if he has lost it yet, though certainly he has given us no chance to question him on the subject, for he vanished as only a native can in the burrows of an Indian city.

At once Marshall changed noticeably. He complained of his head a great deal and grew morose and irritable. The wedding was put off till he grew better, and then suddenly he disappeared—vanished as utterly as Abdulla had done. We found his house empty and his servants gone. Knowing the state of the man's health, we used every means in our power to find him, the Commissioner spend-

ing his money freely; but all with no result. Of course, Slape said "I told you so."

Two years later I was a casual visitor in the house of a big railway official at Agra. I was passing on a hunting trip and he kindly entertained me during my stay in the city. We were sitting on the veranda, smoking and yarning one hot evening, when a coolie entered the compound and inquired for Sutton Sahib. I answered him, and to my surprise he handed me a rather soiled looking note, waiting while I read it. It said:

"Dear Sutton—If you have not quite forgotten an old friend, come at once. Follow the bearer. If you care to come, do not delay. My time is almost up.

"Yours of old,

"P. MARSHALL."

I stared at the thing in amaze. Then I made an incoherent excuse to my astonished host and left the grounds.

In an old hut on the outskirts of the bazaar I found him. A native woman was crying at the foot of the charpie on which he lay. I took in the whole thing at a glance and understood. I had seen cases before, but none of them ever had come home to me like this.

He was lying there an utter wreck. Gone native. Run amuck. Dying in a hut outside an old cow byre. I did what I could, but it was all too little, and when the early dawn came creeping in he whispered a faint good-by, touching gently the hair of the weeping woman before he died. She ran out shrieking and flung herself down among the sleeping buffalo, tearing her hair and beating her breasts, after the manner of her kind.

The broken man sobbed out his pitiful story in my arms that night before he went. He had grown to believe in the potency of the crystal, despite an incredulous temperament. Then when his success came he grew jealous of its supposed help and so sent it away from the front. The wound that he got after that frightened him but made him dogged, too, to stand alone, so later he gave it to the girl as a kind of half measure. When it was stolen he imputed his weakness and lack of mental power to the loss instead of the wound. He got nervous with thinking and fearing, he knew not what. What he must have suffered before he ran—for he was a brave man—God only knows. He asked me pitifully before he went if it were true; if

what he had done didn't count; if it was all due to the crystal. And I, though truly I was much troubled and utterly perplexed, answered boldly, "Bosh!"; that if he had not had the brains Heaven itself could not have produced the results. And I think that's true, yet——.

CHAPTER V.

The Jadoo Maker.

One night about two years after poor Marshall's death, there came a knock at my door and to my astonishment the boy announced "Eshlape Sahib," and in he walked. To say I was astonished doesn't half express it. I had thought he was settled in London where he had gone the previous year and his last letter had said nothing to the contrary, but it seems he got weary of "its gritty pavements" and the girl's people being out here too, there was no difficulty, so he packed up and came back as many another has longed to do. I couldn't understand it then but now—ah well, perhaps some day—but that's a digression.

So our old times began again with this difference, that many of our evenings were spent in the house in the Lal Bazaar. I own I always made one of the party with some shrinking though I certainly enjoyed myself, once under the charm of Narda's hospitality.

Hey day! what a woman she was and how she understood men! I think we were all more or less under the influence of her charm, and many a happy evening we passed discussing verily everything under the sun. Nevertheless when those things which seemed to delight Mirza and Slape came up—those un-understandable things—as they naturally did often, the night was spoiled for me; that terrible figure of the ghostly fakir would rise up and then when I went to bed, dreams would come and finally I got irritable about it and refused to go there any more.

Perhaps there were other reasons but I steadily ignored them if there were, and it doesn't matter anyway.

Now I have always held—our scientists to the contrary notwithstanding—that there is such a thing as knowing too much—as growing bigger than your God, but I doubt if it pays. Let it be clearly understood that I am not referring to Narda, for as far as I can judge she used her knowledge wisely, as her lights went. For me—even though I had ceased to visit her—she stands exempt from criticism. She was always a law unto herself, and I, well I'm a plain man and beyond

surgery and a little medicine not very wise.

But others there are who have strange knowledge also, whose ways are dark and devious and whose end is always—mark me —always, sudden.

Such a man was Bizam Tak, the jadoo maker. He had not only outgrown his God, but become a devil, the better to mock him, and his brethren in Rajana took his name on their lips with awe, and their wives used it to frighten the little ones. Even at the court of the Raja his fame was great, and he might have held high office there; but who, bowing not to God, should bow to kings? So he lived aloof—none rightly knew where—and worked his wizardries. And the fame of his wonders had reached even me, for if the curry soured or the rice boiled hard, Boir Mas, my general factotum, would mutter the name of Tak, coupled with a malediction, deep down in his great black beard.

I think that even Narda stood a little in awe of him, and she once said that his power for evil was greater than hers; but, then, she never worked evil, and, despite her great knowledge, she walked with the God she knew, humbly, as a little child.

Now, Ager Mirza was a dauntless man before men. I have seen him face death with the smoke from his cigarette floating in a lazy, unbroken stream between his lips. I saw him open a box, and, as he lifted the lid, a cobra sprang with a hissing rush at his throat. It missed the flesh, and the next moment the man's slim brown fingers were twisted round the reptile's neck and he was blowing the cigarette smoke into the angry snake's jaws, remarking quietly that it was another present from his friends who loved him.

Six months hardly ever passed without an attempt being made on the man's life, some subtle as the wisdom of a cobra, others as brutal as the hate that inspired them; for they had long ago divined at the court of Materdas that the British Government was holding him as a whip over them, and that a change of policy might make the powers at Calcutta recognize Prince Ager's claim to the throne openly. Then to resist would be impossible. So it came to pass that many plans had been made by those whom Mirza called "his friends in Materdas."

All through the strain of such a life Prince

Ager had passed on his way gay and smiling, probably the best-loved and best-hated man in the empire—certainly the most remarked. Yet this man of steel suddenly fell, and his fall was as mysterious as it was pitiable. I saw him at the races one afternoon a jovial, gallant, light-hearted gentleman, and three days later, keeping a dinner engagement with him, I found a nervous, distraught man, who started like a frightened child at his own shadow.

He told me the trouble after dinner, sitting in a glare of hot lamps in the library, instead of out on the cool veranda. It was Bizam Tak.

I'm afraid I laughed, but his hurt look sobered me, and I argued the matter out with him; but it was all no use. Narda knew; she had told him, and the shadow was with him always. What shadow? Ah, I could not understand these things, and so on. Of course I couldn't, but I sent him a tonic, which he threw out of the window promptly; and which Selim, the dog boy, seized and drank with much gusto.

We had a rush of fever at the hospital at this time, and I was kept at it night and day,

and couldn't see anything of the man; but I knew Slape was in town and looking after him, and I expected each day to see the pair of them lolling in my den when I got out of the wards.

It was ten days before I heard anything; then Slape turned up alone, and I knew something was wrong the moment I saw his face. His first words confirmed me.

"Have you seen him?"

"Seen whom?"

"Mirza, man; Mirza."

"Seen him? I? No. Is he lost?"

"Lost? Yes, that's just it. He is lost."

"Oh, get out; you're joking."

"Joking be damned! Listen man. He's been ill all week. That cursed Rajput devil was marking him as sure as fate. I stayed with him four nights, but had to leave yesterday afternoon. I was back by nine o'clock, and the man was gone—gone, and none of his people knew he was out of his room."

"Well, but he might have had business or——"

"Man, I tell you he was so weak he could hardly stagger across the room.'

That settled me, and I stared in blank

L. of C.

amazement while Slape rattled on: "I'm afraid he's off mentally. He acted strangely once or twice while I was with him, and now God knows where he'll bring up. If that devil gets him up to Materdas they'll murder him to a certainty. Narda said that the Bizam's people were at the back of this business, as usual, and it certainly looks as if they would succeed this time."

"And you actually believe this Bizam—what's his name?—has put a spell on him?" I asked, for the whole thing seemed beyond belief, even in a country like India.

"Believe it? Certainly I do, and it's not so uncommon as you seem to think, only your friends and mine are usually exempt."

Seeing Slape's state of mind I said no more. It was useless, anyway. The thing to be done was to find the man, and from all tokens we'd have our hands full doing it. When a man like Mirza, half native as he is, steps out of his class and into the bazaars for any cause whatever he's hidden as safely as though the earth had swallowed him. A curtain, jealously guarded on the one side, hangs between the races, white and brown, and behind that curtain lies sanctuary for him who has a

right to it. His brother who has aught against him as a man may stab him behind the curtain, but never will betray him to the "accursed" beyond the veil.

Besides this, we were denied what little assistance we might have had from the police, as long ago our word had been given to the missing man never under any pretext to introduce them into his affairs, so jealously did he guard the many secrets of his life. So, with this forlorn outlook, I was not so averse as I might have been (I hate messing with things I don't understand) to Slape's proposal that we go to Narda's house, in the Lal Bazaar, and the late evening found us stumbling through the ill-lighted and often evil-smelling byways of the Boree Bazaar. Every white man reviles these noisome native haunts, with their high blank walls and low-arched doorways, with their steaming buffalo and fetid cow byres, where the fierce rush of a snarling bandakoot makes one spring aside with a mouthful of nervous curses—every one reviles them; yet, yet—ask the man who's left it all what particular thing it is that pulls his heartstrings as he tramps the London pavements, and he'll tell you, if he's

honest, it's those evil, smelly bazaars with all their possibilities of wickedness. What if the walls are blank and high and the great rats scurry beneath? Sometimes—not too often—windows open, and maybe a spray of jasmine falls. For a brief moment the veil of the unknown is drawn aside and the bandakoots are forgotten. What more would you, London, New York? Bah! They have no unknown.

So we came to the gate in the wall that leads to the place of Narda. She was pacing back and forth like a caged tigress when we lifted the purdah but she welcomed us both with a hand, saying as she drew us in: "You are late, my friends. Or is it that I am impatient?"

"You expected us, then?" asked Slape.

"Yes. There is much to do. He must be found to-night or——"

"You do not know where he is, then?"

"No, but I will find him."

"Suppose he——"

"Yes, I know. Still I will find him—and avenge him."

She rose to her full height as she spoke—a tall, queenly figure; and as she did so a glit-

tering movement in her dark hair caught my eye, and there, among all the strange ornaments, was curled a little serpent—the emblem of her strange power. Then we knew that she had come out like a strong man armed, and, looking in her eyes, I saw that which made me glad that my account with our missing friend was clean.

Slape asked her if she could not find him with the great crystal that still stood pulsing in the centre of the room; but she said, "No"; that the jadoo was too strong for the crystal; and it would no longer work true; but she had another and a higher way, and we must help her. And we gave our words as men to stand by her that night, whatever came; for, after all, she was a woman—a beautiful one—and seemed in dire trouble, despite her brave front, as one who had lifted a heavier burden than she could carry.

On one of the walls facing the north hung a large shining disk, on which vibrated a slender gold hand, and while the woman waited and talked she watched this hand continually. At last it slipped and fell with a ringing, musical slur, and we saw that it had stopped at one of the zodiacal signs that

ringed the disk. Then Narda rose slowly.

"The hour has fallen. May the gods sustain us now, for the door is shut and the issue is in their hands. Still, we know, each in our own way, that Good is greater than Evil. You know how to use your strength, Mr. Slape; and you, doctor"—turning to me—"I need your help in your own way. Do not try to understand anything you see tonight, but trust me a moment now and remember what I say."

She put her long brown fingers to my forehead, lifting my head by the action, till I was looking up into her dark, grave eyes. At the touch of her fingers a heaviness, a mental sluggishness, born of the strain of overwork, cleared away, leaving my brain fresh and clear, and her words sounded like bell notes ringing through it.

"Now listen. Set your mind, firm and fast, on the God your mother taught you, and whatever you see or hear in this room tonight trust Him, like a little child, to bring His way to pass. That is all. You understand?"

She left me then and busied herself with her strange preparations for the test of her

powers. I may say before I go further that those words, "Trust Him like a little child," never for an instant left me through the scene that followed; while my flesh crept and my throat contracted with an agony of fear, ever back of my brain, staying me, ran the words, like a rhythmic silver chime, "Trust Him like a little child."

Narda made her arrangements, strange as they were, quickly and deftly. They consisted chiefly in the placing of tiny lights in various positions, till they took the form of a great scorpion, the zodiacal home of mystic power. These lights showed little more than tiny bright sparks, which were reflected back and forth in bewildering fashion by crystal reflectors set at intervals. At the lower end, or tail, of the scorpion Narda stood motionless for some minutes over a strangely formed brazier, like a great chafing dish. Into this I saw her pour oil and water and several powders, but, I am ready to swear, set no light.

She passed swiftly round the room, putting out all the lamps save those of the sign, so that the curious emblem of good and evil stood out like a sparkling living thing, while

all around the shadows hung heavy and seemed to crawl forward, only to be driven back by the sharp flashing of the crystals.

We watched Narda moving in the shadows, her long white draperies dim and indistinct; saw her shapely arms raised and moving now this way, now that, but of voice there was none.

Again came the slurring chime of the disk hand, and we saw that it held in the "House of Scorpio." At the sound Narda turned abruptly and seated herself in the big cushioned chair that stood isolated on its glass castors at the head of the flashing sign. We could see her dimly and watched her long. We saw her white-robed bosom rise and fall rhythmically till she seemed to sleep; but the serpent in her hair stood alert, poised and vibrating, its slim head darting restlessly from side to side.

How long we sat I do not know, but to my tense nerves at least the time and the silence seemed alike intolerable. There was no movement, no sound save the occasional slur of the hand on the disk, and this seemed to jar the whole room, so intense was the previous silence. The silence held till the sheer

monotony of the thing quieted our nerves, and I at least grew drowsy as I sat. I believe my head nodded and my body lurched once and then again; then something horrible came and mixed with my half-dreaming mind, and in an instant I was awake and straining every nerve, while Slape gripped my wrist till the hand hung limp and numb with the pressure. Then it came again, a whimpering cry, as of a little child wailing just beyond the light.

I had often heard of the "child cry" used in the native magic, and had been at a loss to account for it; but now, when I heard the lonely sound sobbing itself out in the shadows, like a baby soul shut out of heaven and forgotten, I realized the power of the thing for horror. The sound seemed to come from the brazier, and as we bent forward, gazing eagerly, we saw something in that brazier that was not there before—something vague, that moved and flopped helplessly around; and then again came the whimpering cry.

The cry had hardly died away when the brazier began to glow and fumes and smoke arose from it; then red fire, that seethed and twisted sluggishly, and in the fire a Thing

that moved and moaned, as if in pain, and then half-crawled out; but the fire rose and licked at it, and it fell back with a little shriek, and the fire rolled smoothly over it.

Now, whether the room really grew chill or it was the horror of that fiery, slimy pot I cannot say, but we two strong men were shivering as with ague, the cold cut to the bone even while the great sweat drops rolled from us. And through all this Narda sat and gave no sign, but the serpent was poised, as if to strike.

Then Slape rose and shook himself fiercely, and I heard him swearing softly in his throat as he crept cautiously toward the glowing pot. I followed and leaned over him as he bent to peer at the hot, fuming mass. And while we looked a scarlet cinder detached itself and leaped clear, landing on the polished floor and rolling quickly away, scorching the boards as it went. It did not die out, but kept its scarlet heart burning brightly, and directly in its course lay the piled-up rugs and pillows that Narda used.

Seeing the danger of them catching fire, Slape sprang across the lights and out of the sign that had in a way shut us in before.

With three long strides he had reached the rugs, and I saw his form loom up in the dusk beyond the rolling cylinder, saw his foot rise and fall upon it, and then there came a cry from him, and from the floor at his feet a tongue of flame leaped up in a sinuous, twisting flash, and seemed to lick him as he fell back.

And as the flash of the flame died away there came a hoarse, brutal laugh, so malignant, jeering and horrible that I dropped back with a shudder, grasping the great pillows in an agony of fear.

To my dying day I know I shall not forget it. In the daylight it is weak, and I am a man; but at night, even while dreaming pleasant things, there seems to fall a sudden hush and I catch myself listening and wondering uneasily and then, far off, back of the sunshine it starts. I cannot even hear it but I know it is coming and shiver and strain my ears even as I smile at my friends. They too grow uneasy, glance askance at me and melt away. The sun fades down and then borne on the first breath of a chilling wind it comes, at first faint and thin, then growing louder and stronger, rushing down the wind upon

me. And I—I cannot move—can barely breathe. I feel for one brief instant the touch of the clammy horror overwhelming me and then—ah God, I wake! Wake with the sweat of fear on my brow, with my body in an ague, and worst of all, with the knowledge that I am a coward; one who dare not face the night, must burn a lamp forsooth, like a little frightened child.

Just what followed that laugh I cannot rightly say, only that I lay there among the pillows staring out with wide, strained eyeballs. The room was full of sulphurous smoke, and just out there in the shadows was my friend, probably hurt, for he had given no sign after that first cry—possibly dead—and yet I lay there, afraid to go and see.

The smoke in the room grew thicker, and heaved and tossed as if stirred by a mighty wind, and out of it came voices and sullen mutterings in words I could not understand. Then a voice, harsh and jeering as the laugh, spoke words, again strange, but challenging, insulting. And as the words died away I heard a stir of drapery and Narda crossed the sign before my eyes and passed beyond,

out into the smoke. And it swallowed her up so that I could not so much as see her robe, but I saw the smoke bank and heave and writhe and twist, and soon it drew away and seemed to concentrate in one great mass; and as it did so I saw her for a moment facing the blackness and throwing out her arms forbiddingly toward it. But the mass grew blacker and its convolutions more and more rapid, and then the thing took a certain shape and form—a huge head, with toothless jaws and malignant eyes.

And this embodiment of the blackness drew close upon the woman, breathing hotly on her. For a moment she stood her ground, but the thing grew upon her, seeming to smother her, and back she fell, step by step, toward the lighted sign. She had just reached the first light of the scorpion's tail when the thing made a rush. Two long, hairy arms, with gnarled fingers on the horny hands, darted toward her, grasping her throat.

After the long horror the end came quickly. Ere the black quite touched the white something flashed in the strange yellow light—flashed in a long, hissing streak—and the serpent drew back and the bony hands fell

away, while the smoke fairly boiled as it rose and fell, twisted, curled and writhed, and grew less and yet still less.

And oh! I think it was the worst of all to watch that dumb agony, to feel the shrieks that you could not hear, and see the fearful thing grow smaller and smaller, till there was only a little smoky bubble left; and then, like a bubble, that, too, burst, and all was still. But as our awe-struck eyes followed the faint trail of the last dim wreath there came upon the quiet room a sigh, so deep, so mournful that it seemed as though nature's heart were rent in twain.

Narda was bending over Slape who lay on the pillows, where he had fallen, touching him gently and lightly and speaking to him as he gradually came back to consciousness. As I came up she pointed to his forehead, and I saw an angry, red wound, as from a bad burn. And even as I looked Slape roused and spoke to us, and, looking around curiously, asked, "Hasn't he come yet?"

I would have questioned him, but Narda silenced me with a look as she asked, "Where did you leave him?"

"At the gate in the wall, of course, as you

told me. He ought to be here now. Ah!"

There came a low knock at the bolted door, and Narda took up the lamp, and, opening it, drew back the purdah. A man, dressed like a coolie, stood at the lintel, dirty and unshaved; but she drew him in, and, drawing him close, kissed his forehead. It was His Highness Prince Ager Mirza.

Of the man's wanderings we could learn nothing; his mind was blank about it. The only thing he remembered was hearing the voice of Narda calling to him from a long way off, and he wanted to go to her, but could not find the way till Slape came and brought him to the gate in the wall that he knew so well.

And as I lay on my cot in the cool gray dawn, smoking and puzzling over the things that I had just seen, another new puzzle rose in my brain and put to flight all the rest—why did Narda kiss Mirza?

The news of the death of Bizam Tak came by word of mouth to the native bazaars two days later. Rumors differed—he had been in a trance; he had been drunk; he had merely slept; but he had died in the night, and, as they all agreed, from the bite of a

snake, for its fangs had left two little purple spots in his throat.

Now here endeth the Chronicles of Mirza, for when a man has passed his prime it is meet that he should step aside and make place for another that is stronger than he. And I too, am growing old and all those happy days with Prince Al Raschid are past and gone and live with me in memory only, excepting when I dream.

Of course Mirza and Narda followed their fate, and the house in the Lal Bazaar knew the woman no more. They have spoken of visiting me here in London—in Holborn. Ye Gods! Fancy Mr. and Mrs. and Master Al Raschid sitting down to that shabby mahogany! Think of my trotting them round to the Music Halls. No, no! It won't do, I'll keep my ideals. I know the Prince is old and fat and bald and Narda—Well there, the fire is out and my pipe, and I'd rather dream than think to-night.

THE SAVIOR OF THE GUNS.

THE SAVIOR OF THE GUNS.

Of course I was at a disadvantage from the start, and still remain so, as I'm not a professional fighter; and then again I was very young, and the thing came so suddenly, like lightning out of a clear sky. I confess that I got rattled and I'm afraid I ran a bit amuck; a pretty easy thing to do under a hot sun, and not to be too severely criticised. On this I can speak with professional authority.

It was just toward the end of that last little Afghan misunderstanding, when Ayub Khan was letting us know a thing or two, and we were beginning to prove more apt scholars than he fancied. Dicky Slape and I were up from Bombay doing volunteer work with the hospital corps. We were attached to a big horse battery—the Ninth Irish, if I remember rightly—and the half of a native light mountain battery to fill up. Besides our "Tommies," we had some two thousand Sepoys, picked fighters every man of them; and I

know we thought that we were just about good enough for anything that was floating round looking for trouble.

As to where we were going or what we were doing, I give it up. We would march two days to the north, over hills and nullahs, break our way through miles of dense jungle, drag the guns through dried-up water courses under a sweltering sun, and finally circle round east or west and go back again.

I suppose the Colonel knew what he was about, as he had wig-wag men out on the hills continually, but I'll be hanged if I believe another soul knew even where we were. Of course there were various rumors in the air, the most plausible of which was that we were bottling up a big tribe of Hillsmen who wanted to join our friend Ayub.

Naturally the temper of the battery wasn't exactly angelic; dragging those twelve-horse guns over almost impassable country and then dragging them back again—and apparently all for no purpose—was hardly likely to be productive of an exemplary spirit and conversation, even had the Ninth been built that way. So the hills resounded with the crack of whips puncturing fierce, blood-curd-

ling oaths and the clang of iron-shod gun-wheels as they bounded and crashed along the rocky route, while occasionally the harsh scream of a refractory baggage camel would add to the pandemonium.

Dicky and I thought that we were abused by being stuck on to the tail of such an unsatisfactory expedition as this, when there were such lively times 'way ahead at the front. We had no patients in the hospital, and dispensing did not take up more than a couple of hours a day, but the dreary monotony of the thing fairly broke our hearts; and added to this was the fear that all the fun would be over and we would be sent back to Bombay without either of us seeing a scrap. We had heard firing several times while we lay in reserve, and after the affair was over had been rushed up front to aid the hospital staff there, and then, before another shot was fired, we were sent back to our "Royal Irish Stick-in-the-Muds," as we dubbed them.

At last it came, however, and I think we both got enough to last us for the rest of our lives.

We had come into camp early one Sunday morning after one of our usual fruitless

prowls. Away, and on the side of the camp furthest from the hospital tents, were some foothills that ran up and back to what I have since learned was a spur of the Hala Mountains. To the left of these foothills and directly behind the camp the guns were parked. Discipline had grown somewhat lax, especially on Sundays, and it was customary for the various battery champions to engage in bare knuckle fights, a form of amusement much in favor with Thomas Atkins.

A quiet spot would be chosen, well out of range of the provost and the guardhouse tent, when the two would strip, and amid the cheers of their several factions proceed to pummel each other beyond recognition. The prize in these encounters was rarely more than a few quarts of porter, and as often as not they were indulged in for pure Irish love of a scrap.

Now, I had attended one or two of these little interviews, and as my leather medicine case usually contained a flask of whiskey I was made welcome. On this particular Sunday morning I was given the tip that quite the most important meeting of the season was to take place that afternoon between Ted

McGann and "Scrapper" Foley, both battery drivers. The men had each fought all comers and neither had been beaten, and now they were to come together themselves, and a battle royal was expected.

I knew McGann well; a big, muscular, Irish giant, who on occasions could swear the whole battery to a standstill; as good-natured a ruffian as ever strode a horse, and I certainly could not see where the other fellow came in at all.

I tried to get Dickey to come along, but he said we were a lot of blankety blank brutes, etc., so I saddled my pony and rode off by myself. It was a long ride, through a thick patch of jungle, then out over the plain for a couple of miles to the foothills. I had had the direction pointed out to me, and expected to have no difficulty in finding the way; but I suppose I must have been late in starting. Anyway, I failed to meet any of the men going out, and must have gone considerably out of my way before I finally saw the crowd. They were gathered in a little clearing just on the edge of the great jungle that spread away up the mountains, with hardly a break for miles and miles.

The men were stripped and battling like tigers, and the thud of heavy fists on naked flesh was accompanied by the gasps and ejaculations of the spectators as they surged in a solid ring round them. The fight was a game one, and McGann was living well up to my expectations and slowly wearing his man out, when suddenly another fight started on the outside of the ring. I had noticed with surprise several natives in the crowd as I rode up, but thought that they were some of our Sepoys. Now I saw my error; for at the starting of the outside fight a cry rose, and a dozen long Afghan knives flashed in the sunlight and sank in the group of excited men before they knew that danger was near.

Then came a horrible panic. The men tried to break and run, but the fierce Hillsmen swarmed in hundreds and blocked every path. Our men were unarmed save for their belts, but many a savage head went down under the brass buckles. They were banked up in a solid mass round my pony for awhile so that I could not stir. Once I caught sight of McGann—naked, bloody and terrible—standing across the body of his late foe, his arms swinging like flails, and I saw man after

man go down beneath their crashing weight; and then the fight swept in between us, and the next instant a man sprang savagely at my throat.

I saw the flash of a long knife, but at this point the pony took a hand in the matter and doubled up my assailant with a kick in the solar plexus. And he and I made a break for liberty, and had almost got clear out to the open when four of the black devils rushed us together, and at the same instant a wild cut from behind ripped my arm open, and the sudden pain made me drop my only weapon, my riding whip.

I had no time to think, to pray, before the foremost man had grasped my bridle and—then came a fierce Irish oath, a savage, grinding smash and a hoarse voice in my ears: "Ride, sonny, ride like hell, and duck, for Gawd's sake, duck!"

I turned for an instant, my pony springing almost from under me as McGann struck her savagely, and saw him standing off the crowd for my escape. He had a knife in each hand that he had wrenched from men as he struck them down, and his terrible execution checked the rush for one moment, and that mo-

ment gave me my chance. So far there had been never a shot fired. The fight had been desperate, but beyond the fierce Irish curses, silent. The evident intention was to surprise the camp before they could bring up the guns; and as my mare went by the last clump of jungle like a flying shadow there was a hoarse murmur, and then for the last time I heard McGann's voice in the distance, "Duck, fur Gawd's sake, duck!" and I ducked—God bless him!—I ducked, and the next moment the ping of a jezail bullet told me that I'd done it none too soon.

What a ride that was! The bullets kept skimming over me and under me as I lay along the pony's neck, and they chased us right into camp, sometimes by short cuts—for I had to keep to the open and so go round—getting almost within striking distance of those long knives.

God forgive me! but I was so utterly terrified that I only clung, sobbing and moaning in an agony of terror, to the pony's neck. Suddenly she was stopped short with a wrench and I waited with my eyes shut for the end, till a rough arm seized me and a rougher voice shouted, "Good Gawd! Doc, what's up."

I came to my senses with a gasp and tumbled off the pony into the hands of the corporal's guard, who were coming up on the double to find out the meaning of the distant shots. Another moment and a bugle sang shrilly and the whole camp sprang to active life, while from the distant foothills came a muttering that grew to a hoarse roar as Ayub Khan and his wild, glittering army swept into sight.

The buzz in the camp grew to a clanging din. Everything was in the wildest confusion; the noise of a thousand feet shook the ground; a dozen bugles rang out, and the horses came with a rush, ridden hard with whip and spur, their chains clashing and jangling as they dashed for the guns. They were followed by a couple of regiments of our Goorkhas, who went forward at the double, belting and fixing bayonets as they ran, their boyish faces set and their eyes snapping eagerly.

Just then the Adjutant rode past, and, seeing me, reined up with a jerk: "Any men in the hospital, youngster?"

"No, sir."

"Well, get your doolies together; quick; go back to the rear about five hundred yards so

that I can find you readily when I want you."

"And the tents sir?"

"Oh, damn the tents. Let 'em stay." And off he went, bawling to a bugler as he rode.

Well, you may be sure we scrambled then, and in about five minutes Dick and I had the doolies together and were trotting to the rear.

Meantime over toward the foot-hills there was a steady, rippling snarl, with now and again a faint Goorkha cheer. Then the guns began to roar, but only fitfully, and I sat on the mare and strained my eyes to see how things were going. The whole plain was covered with a heavy pall of smoke that rose slowly and sullenly to the hills above; but with the exception of an occasional glare of flame and now and again a shadowy moving mass, I could see nothing.

Then as I still watched, out came one of the guns, the men clinging to the caisson and the drivers lashing the horses furiously.

On they came, snorting, reeking and cursing, the gun bouncing and smashing after the flying horses. Then another and another dashed by, overturning tents and stores in their mad flight.

What did it mean? I was dazed, bewildered. The firing had drawn close, and dimly through the smoke came the broken ranks of our brave Goorkhas, running, fighting and cursing in that horrible, smoky glare; reforming at every chance, only to be broken again as the fierce Paythan wave broke over them.

I sat in my saddle in stupid bewilderment, absolutely lost in the thick of the fight. Whichever way I turned there was nothing but that horrible, choking smoke and those sullen glares of hellish flame, with here and there hand-to-hand struggles seen for a moment dim, indistinct and terrible, then blotted out in flame and smoke.

Just then the last gun got clear and came flying past. Riding along with the leaders, his face all bloody, with a heavy whip in one hand and a revolver in the other, came the Adjutant, lashing the horses desperately. As he passed he caught sight of me, and with a fierce oath leaned over and struck my pony, "Damn you, get back, you fool!" and he was gone, while the pony reared and plunged, and with a yell I woke up. Aye, woke and howled and shouted wildly, firing my revolver into the smoke and waving my sword as

the pony plunged after the retreating gun.

Fortunately, the plucky little mare had more sense than her master and got in with the retreat; but it was a long time before I came to myself, weary and hoarse with shouting. I was riding along with the battery, and gradually the scorching fire blot faded a little out of my eyes and I grew sane and ashamed of myself, though I doubt if any man in that wild, sweating crowd had even seen my crazy exhibition, for bullets were still whistling like hail around us and men dropped in ones and twos every moment.

As we raced on a man on a big charger, whom I hardly recognized for our old Colonel, caught up with me and rode a moment at my side. He looked down with a strange, kindly look in his eyes, that I had never seen before. Then he leaned over and stroked the mare's neck and said, "Ease her a little, sonny; ease her." He finally slackened his pace with us for some fifty yards and then said, "Now, boy, let her go!' and, touching his own horse, he sprang forward and the pony went after him like a flash. A few yards further on and I saw what it meant. There, right across our path, lay a broad,

deep ditch; and over it were going the guns, some leaping clean after the flying horses, others jarring and jamming on the opposite bank and lifted beyond by sheer muscle and brawn.

The mare could never have cleared it as I was riding her; but as the Colonel's charger rose to the stiff jump she followed easily, with a shrill whinney to the stallion, and we lighted safe in the paddyfield, and ten minutes later were in the centre of a solid British square, and Dickey and I were laughing and crying and shaking hands—and we weren't the only ones, either.

The ditch ran in an irregular square—as is common in all Indian rice districts—right around the field where we had made our stand. It had lately been flooded for the irrigation of the crop, but had dried down to a sloppy mud bottom. Our guns faced the four sides of the field as the fight came up, for the Hillsmen kept on our track like wolves, the Sikhs and Goorkhas holding them back for four or five minutes at a time, at a horrible cost; but minutes meant guns, and they were worth their weight in gold, while valor and blood cost a shilling a day.

Suddenly a bugle rang, and was echoed far and near. The hour of sacrifice was gone and our gallant Sepoys melted away to right and left before the Afghans and broke into a hard rush for the rear of the field, where rough ladders and ropes were slung to help them across.

Our Afghan friends were on top of us like a whirlwind, but the ditch was our salvation. Again and again they came up, under a murderous fire, right to the ditch. A few leaped it fair and clean, but only to fall on the triple hedge of steel that never wavered. It was our turn at last, and our guns belched out flame and death and cut long lanes in their ranks as they rushed fearlessly up to certain death.

For four long hours they kept at us, fighting grandly, with a stubborn fury that, under wise leadership, would make them well-nigh invincible. Then, like a sullen thundercloud, they drew away, still firing. and we were saved.

When the pall of smoke lifted, the pale, cold moon was floating overhead, shining so peacefully over the scene that it was almost impossible to believe that the last few hours

had been other than a feverish dream. But the horror of that night of hospital work over the course of our wild ride was a fitting ending to so dire a day.

We found McGann stark and naked, with his dead around him, and we wrapped him up in a British Jack and laid him to rest with his foes.

And then, to my utter stupefaction, I found that I—the coward, who had been driven, sobbing with fear, into camp—was a hero, the savior of the guns. The Colonel bought a set of silver-mounted harness for the little mare, and when we got back to Bombay the city was full of the wildest tales of my ride and the number of savage Afghans I had slain, till I could have died of shame. But the more I denied the more they believed, and the Colonel just smiled, too, till one day he came round to the college and called me out before the whole crowd and pinned a cross on my coat for bravery.

DALMUT KHAB, THE FAKIR.

DALMUT KHAB, THE FAKIR.

Early in the seventies, having passed my preliminary examinations for the Indian Army Medical Department, I received orders to join the hospital corps at Nassirabhad, where I expected to "walk the hospital" for two years according to custom before entering the Bombay Medical College for my final course.

At this time I was just eighteen and bubbling over with health and a sense of potentiality that only time and experience could lessen. My blood ran riot as I thought of all I would do and be; I would make a name that should be known across the earth, fame and fortune should—but there, I was very young and surely you understand.

During my studies for "preliminary" I had been searching eagerly for the path that led to glory, and in my enthusiasm the only trouble seemed to be the number of paths open to an earnest young doctor in this land

of famine, fevers, snakes—yes, snakes; there I had it, the cobra de capello with its deadly bite killing off thousands of natives yearly, aye and Europeans, too, and all because I had not arrived on the scene to find and give to the suffering world the antidote that should save them and make me famous forever!

That was the path for me. Had others tried it? I could find no records in my books of any but the most crude attempts to establish a rational basis of treatment, and beyond actual cautery followed by a drunken revel, there was at that time no known drug of sufficient potency to counteract the deadly poison. And this notwithstanding the prevalent belief that an antidote surely existed.

After an unusually large number of deaths from cobra bites articles occasionally would appear in the Bombay Gazette describing battles royal between those hereditary foes, the cobra and the small but plucky mongoose; in these battles I read that the mongoose was often badly bitten but rarely killed, and that on receiving the bite he recognized its importance apparently and immediately ceased hostilities, disappeared for a few moments in the shrubbery and then returned as

aggressive as ever and none the worse for his bite. Spectators, watching these battles, were invariably baffled on attempting to follow the plucky little fellow, but it seemed to be an established fact that if restrained at the critical moment death immediately followed, leading to the inference that the antidote was not in his own system, but probably was obtained from some herb, possibly a common one, whose properties were not rightly appreciated in medicine.

I pondered over this problem till it became a craze, and when I finally reached Nassirabhad I set to work to solve it. I got up several cobra fights, but, with one exception, the snake was a rank quitter and the mongoose won hands down; the exception took place in a cage and both the contestants died. The mongoose, on being bitten and finding his retreat cut off, returned to the fight with a fury and passion that soon finished the snake, and though I tried my best to comfort the victor, he died, veteran fighter though he was, in less than an hour, and I was so remorseful—for he had been a pet—that I gave up that line of investigation.

Naturally my hobby became known in the

Bazaar; in fact I had lost no opportunity of talking with the natives, hoping to catch some hint from them that would set me on the right track, but as usual they seemed to have ideas on all things under heaven except the one in which I was interested, and when I persisted they would inform me that, with all due respect, I, the chota sahib, was foolish to try to interfere in so great a matter, that the God Sahib knew what he was about when he mixed the cobra poison.

But one day when I had almost given up, my boy (who was a Bombay cockney) told me that there was a Bengalee fakir at the gate of the compound whom he eyed with much distrust, but that he had demanded sight of the sahib, and as he claimed to be the bearer of good tidings he had thought better to report the matter.

I went out on the veranda and found my visitor squatted on the rugs, chewing betel and seeming entirely unconcerned at the close proximity of a couple of Bencharie hounds who, with bristles and fangs much in evidence, showed that they shared the boy's distrust.

After ordering off the boy and the dogs

and exchanging salutations the man came to business and told his story. His name was Dalmut Khab. He was a wandering fakir and during his journeyings had heard of my search for the poison antidote. How? Oh, the winds had whispered it; the leaves had rustled it, and perhaps, yes, now he came to think, perhaps the mouth of man had spoken it; anyway he was here and he had the antidote.

His proposal was that to test it I should go with him into the jungle to the home of the cobra, whom he would seduce and then engage until it bit him before my eyes; then, if he died, well and good, he was a vain boaster, but if he lived and so proved his medicine a true antidote, I was to pay him the price he demanded, ten rupees.

The terms seemed fair and the price absurdly small, so we agreed to make the test the following morning, getting away to the woods before the heat of the day.

The man slept in the veranda and was up and ready for the start before the cook had served "chotahazire," and during the long ride he kept his hand on the saddle of my tat the whole distance, covering the ground

with a long, loping stride that gained my infinite respect. At last, at his suggestion, we tied the tat up and entered a low patch of tamarind trees and soon came to an old disused well, such as are common all through the country. Here, the space being naturally clear from the rank undergrowth, we halted and my friend began his preparations for the test.

First he took out from his sari an oblong package, and opening it displayed a bundle of cut leaves, one of which he rolled between his fingers and thumb and then proceeded to masticate, informing me at the same time that he intended to call a cobra by music (as many fakirs pretend to be able to do), that he would rouse the snake to anger and let him strike; that he would probably go into the "place of shadows," as the poison was very bitter, but that he would surely come back. My part was to watch carefully and count the minutes from the time of the bite to the eleventh minute, and, if he had not come back by then, I was to chew one of the leaves myself and to force it into his mouth so that it should lie along the palate. That was all.

These directions made me feel rather

more nervous than I would have cared to acknowledge, but I was determined to see the thing through, and as the man seemed perfectly confident I braced myself—and waited. He had taken out from a little bag the usual reed pipes and began to play softly as he sat squatted on his haunches with his back to the wall of the well. I stood well back, leaning against the trunk of a tree watching every movement.

The music was faint and plaintive and for a while brought no result. Then my eye was caught by a quick movement in the grass that bordered our little clearing; again, a few feet to the right, and this time I saw distinctly the lithe brown body gliding through. The reptile made almost a complete circle, I meantime edging away as he advanced in my direction, while the fakir played on, apparently entirely unmoved by the nearness of our deadly neighbor.

Suddenly the snake glided out into full view, at the same time rising on his tail and swaying from side to side, his hood expanding and closing like a fan and seeming to keep time to the weird, wailing music. For a few moments the fakir kept up the monot-

onous wailing, the snake responding to every wave of sound; then the music grew jerky and irregular, with now and again a jar of discord that seemed to irritate the snake, whose movements grew short and impatient. Its hood expanded angrily, and finally, with a hiss, it half struck at the charmer. At this the man made a quick movement toward the snake, which was swaying, poised, a couple of feet in front of him. Like a flash the snake met him and I saw the stroke as clearly as possible.

The next instant the man held up his wrist on which two tiny spots of blood were all that showed the track of the terrible message of death. The man just glanced at me, dropped his pipes and, taking some of the leaf pulp from his mouth, he clapped it on the wound and bound the end of his sari around it.

"Remember, sahib, eleven minutes!" he said, and then lay back against the wall and closed his eyes. For a few moments his brown, muscular chest rose and fell convulsively under the white linen jacket, then gradually quieted down until, beyond a slight tremor over the region of the heart, I could

see no movement whatever. I eyed him narrowly, watch in hand; I saw a blue-gray pallor rise and mingle with the brown of his cheek, until the whole face was drawn and ashy.

Of course it was not true—it was only imagination—my nerves were unnaturally tense, but a sudden stillness seemed to settle on the whole place and I felt it so keenly that I tried to cry out—to make some noise—but only succeeded in drawing a choking breath. As I stood waiting I was conscious of nothing but the intense silence and that cold, gray face. Once I shivered and looked back fearfully over my shoulder, expecting I know not what, but with a strange sensation that the fakir was not in the body that lay before me, but was watching me from behind.

I glanced at my watch, saw that the eleven minutes were just up and quickly kneeling by his side I placed my hand over his heart. There was no action; I used a stethoscope—still with no result—and then I grew alarmed and hastily began to chew one of the leaves as he had directed.

Meanwhile the man lay there quite motionless; gray flies lighted and moved at will

over the set face and caused never a tremor. I lifted his eyelid and there was a delicate film covering the eyeball; I knew it so well, had seen it so often, but now I felt like a murderer and would have given considerably more than the promised ten rupees to be jogging home with the fellow at my stirrup.

I opened his teeth with hardly an effort and noted that his tongue was doubled back curiously, seeming to block up the entire larynx. Just as I was going to apply the leaves I thought the tongue moved slightly; I watched eagerly and saw it slowly unfold to its normal position, while equally slowly the jaws closed again. Now, as the back of his head was resting against the wall and had not fallen forward, the lower jaw must have moved upward, and my dead friend had, much to my relief, come to life again.

Without any further help from me he slowly threw off the awful bonds that seemed to swathe him about, and the gray pallor faded away before the brown. In a few moments the heart began to act; then after one or two futile efforts the eyelids lifted languidly, the man came back from "the place of shadows," and in a little while was talking to

me rationally. Inside half an hour he apparently was quite himself again and ready for our long hot trot back to civilization.

That night I slept with a precious package of herbs under my pillow and dreamed that an army of cobras came and sat on their tails 'round my bed and begged for a taste of my treasured leaves. As for Dalmut Khab, the fakir, he had gone on his way rejoicing, with ten big silver rupees tucked away somewhere in the intricacies of his clothing. One evening a few weeks later, while sitting on the chief's veranda smoking, after enjoying his wife's hospitality, we heard the "rub-a-dub-dub-a-dub" of a snake charmer's drum and a few moments later a fat, immaculate Hindoo was salaaming before us. I had never seen a really first-class performance and now watched the men handling with impunity some of the most vicious reptiles that the country produced, seeming to have them under perfect control.

After they had gone our talk naturally was of the same subject, and I found my chief a perfect encyclopedia; what he did not know about reptiles—their habits, poisons and antidotes—was not worth knowing, and in a

burst of admiring confidence I related my previous experience.

He stared at me strangely for a full minute before he said: "You haven't been long out from home, have you?"

"No, sir. Why?"

"Well, that explains your credulity, but certainly not your astounding luck in seeing such an exhibition. Of course your leaves are silly trash; there's not a leaf in India that has not been classified and expert scientists know its last virtue, while the greatest chemists in the world are still trying to solve the riddle that you paid your few rupees to have solved for you. Throw away your herbs, my boy, but do not feel too badly chagrined, for I would gladly give five hundred rupees to see the same exhibition that you have seen for ten. And the strange part of it is that in all probability your friend Dalmut knew as much, but (like all of his kind) having a kink somewhere in his brain, he preferred to gain your paltry ten by fraud rather than my five hundred justly.

"Of course, after the exhibition to-night you will see probable collusion between your man and his snake, though if you knew it,

even that does not necessarily follow, and I can only account for the enormous outlay of force wasted—absolutely wasted on you, as you did not in the least appreciate the phenomenon—on the grounds of the tortuous methods of the native mind. Good night, my boy; good night!"

And I went to bed.

THE CASE OF MR. GREENIE.

THE CASE OF MR. GREENIE.

It was on a frightfully hot night up at Nassirabhad, more years ago than I care to remember, that I was first initiated into the mysteries of poker, as it was then played, on occasions, by the officers of Her Majesty's Seventeenth Lancers.

I was a youngster in the medical service at the time, learning my bones, mixing physic in the hospital and generally enjoying what little life there was to be found in the hottest hole in the Bombay Presidency. Many a good man has gone wrong in that sun-cursed station, with its brazen sky above, baking down on the glaring sand plains below, with never a tree to break the awful monotony of shimmering heat. A little, panting hell, ringed in with the Ajmere hills. No wonder "accidents" happened and ghastly things lay out yonder in the spear grass till the fatigue parties brought them in and laid them gently by to rest. "An accident while hunting"—

so ran the merciful report, and we understood.

So, of course, the Seventeenth got a name for high play and reckless, devil-may-care lives, and some criticisms got into the home papers, but all that was wiped out when they got away to Zululand and showed the world that men can die like heroes though they never lived like saints; aye! and perhaps—but that's not the story.

In all the dreary monotony of the station life, about the only thing that affected my mercurial temperament was the lack of cash. My home allowance was gone to the bunnias long before I saw it; and so, when Major Holt promised to "put me onto poker," I had to hie me to the bunnias once more. I managed to raise about fifty rupees, and in due time found myself sitting at a round table with my mentor, striving to master the intricacies of "bobtailed flushes, pairs, straights," etc.; also, the still more delicate art of lying by expression rather than viva voce.

We were sitting in a corner of the mess veranda, and across the heavy night the strains of "My Queen" came floating. Inside young enthusiasts and their perspiring seniors

tried to believe they were enjoying the Christmas dance.

The Major and I played a few experimental hands and then began with a small limit, I betting as my courage and my cards seemed to dictate. Our little game was soon spotted, however, and half an hour after we started the big round table was full of eager players, ringed round by equally eager spectators.

For a while all my interest consisted in "chipping in," then a small pot came my way by default, and as I gathered it in something in me roused and stirred. I felt my pulses quicken, my diffidence vanish, and from that moment I became a factor in the game. To this day I cannot tell what possessed me. I completely ignored the few rules that I had learned and played an entirely—shall I call it emotional game? I did just what I felt like doing at the moment, with but the smallest regard for my cards, seeming to follow blindly some inner guide that was leading me. I won steadily, sometimes on absurd hands, dropping out again on others which should have been played to the limit, and then finding that better ones had been out against me.

When the reveille sounded I was the only

one of the original players still at the table; but as each left, his place had been eagerly filled. So it went on all day, men going and coming, the steward being kept busy providing food, a bite of chicken and a swallow of whiskey, as we sat.

The peculiarity of my play and the steady run of luck, of course, attracted attention. Men with good hands began to drop out when the "Doctor" stayed in, and the spectators bunched behind my chair, criticising my crazy play freely, but my winnings kept on steadily increasing. My pockets were full of notes and silver currency, but the devil that had waked in me would not cry enough. I have often wondered since how long I could have kept on. As it was, I had not missed a hand nor left my chair for nearly thirty hours, and yet was not conscious of any sense of weariness.

Late that night a hospital hamall brought a note from the head apothecary requiring my immediate presence, and my little game was over. I staggered as I rose from the chair after my long sitting; my legs would hardly support me across the veranda; but before I got to the hospital I was all right

again, though not in the best of temper at having to leave the game.

I found a stranger with the apothecary, a man some few years my senior, for whom he wished to claim my hospitality. He introduced him as Mr. Greenie, and stated that he had missed the train while on his way to Jubblepore; that his baggage and also his servant had gone on with his tickets, and, unfortunately, by some mistake, with his money, too. They would doubtless wait for him at Ajmere, and in the meantime he had come over to the hospital for a night's lodging, and as the apothecary's bungalow was full, his entertainment devolved on me.

I had a cot moved from one of the wards to my rooms and set to work to play the host to the best of my ability. After supper we spent a pleasant hour smoking and chatting. I related my poker experience. How much had I won? I did not know. Was even then too tired to count; and, lifting the lid of a traveling trunk, I emptied my pockets into one corner and tumbled some clothes carelessly over the money, saying that I would save the pleasure of counting it till morning.

I think that Mr. Greenie was the most

charming man that I ever met. He had a fund of anecdote and a rare magnetic gift of holding your attention and interesting you in the most trivial remarks, though from hints of personal experience that he let fall I judged that he must be considerably older than he looked. Among his other accomplishments was a rich, mellow voice of a peculiar timbre, which, although uncultivated, rang as clear and sweet as a clarion. Among other things, he sang "True Till Death," the now well-known English ballad. I had never heard it before, and it was, in fact, quite new at that time, and no voice ever affected me quite as his did that night. Something in the quality of tone, or, perhaps, the magnetism of the man, touched a chord that, despite of years and all that followed, vibrates yet.

Before we went to sleep he showed me the miniature of a young girl, and told me that they had been married a little over a year and that the first baby had just come to them. I slept late, after all the excitement, and only woke in answer to the hamall's repeated knocking. The doctor sahib was going his rounds and waiting for me.

I left my new friend still sleeping, and, or-

dering breakfast for a later hour, went my rounds and did my dispensary work, after which he and I made a hearty breakfast and then drove over to the railway station. I got him a ticket for Ajmere—on credit, by the bye, as I had forgotten, in the hurry for the train, that I had turned out my pockets the night before. As he leaned out of the carriage, just before starting time, I suddenly noticed that the locket was missing from his chain, and called his attention to it. He was terribly put out—in fact, more so than the occasion seemed to warrant. Just then the train pulled out, and the last I saw of him he was still frowning angrily at his watch guard.

On returning home I went to my trunk with the pleasant object of counting my gains of the previous night. Lifting the lid I thrust my hand down in the corner and found—nothing! For an instant I was paralyzed, then dragged the various contents out helter-skelter, even feeling in the pockets of the clothes in my bewilderment, but my booty was gone—gone to the last piece! As I was replacing the tumbled things something bright on the edge of the tray caught my eye, and there, jammed in the brass tray clip, was

Greenie's locket. I stared at it dumbly for a minute, and then, as its significance broke on me, I crouched on the floor and sobbed like a little child.

God knows it wasn't the money so much, though that was bad enough; but it was the breaking of the first ideal, the killing of a boy's faith. That apparently ended the episode. I was in a trinket containing the portrait of some other body's wife, and out—well, say, three thousand rupees.

Some few years later I had given up my army commission and accepted the position of house surgeon at the Byculla Hospital in Bombay, and naturally was in touch with all gayeties of that hospitable city. It was at a garden party, in the height of the season, that I met the sister of an old college chum, and then—well, this isn't a love story, but the whole world seemed changed and life took on a different meaning. My friendship with her brother stood me in good stead, and I saw her almost daily; and when the season was over and they went back to their home at Poona, I was invited there with Charlie.

Mr. Henderson was a commissioner of something or other, so, of course, the home

was as perfect as money could make it. There was a large house party, besides which, hardly an evening passed without half a dozen young folk dropping in for music, billiards or cards, and life went by like a pleasant dream. There were long canters over the maidans, in the cool, gray dawn; lazy, sleeping afternoons; evening on the tennis courts, and then the night, with the glorious moonlit gardens echoing the music of fresh young voices as song and laughter filled the starry night.

I made frequent trips back and forth to Bombay, and on one of these occasions found a new patient in the pauper ward who immediately attracted my attention and aroused my keenest interest. She was a pale, pathetic looking woman, but with an unmistakable stamp of refinement, and a face that must once have been simply ideal, but now was wasted and drawn, while her great gray eyes were filled with a wistful sadness that haunted me. It was phthisis in its last stages, and the case was hopeless from the first. I had her moved to a private ward and made her as comfortable as I could. The poor girl's gratitude for a few little kind-

nesses spoke volumes for her past privations, and my interest grew till we became fast friends, and I learned by degrees her sorrowful story.

It was the same old pathetic tale of a man's weakness and a young girl's passionate love. I had heard it so often and puzzled over the problem till my brain grew weary; but this woman's case came closer home, for, while clearing out my desk one day, I came across the locket that held the portrait of Greenie's wife; and, as I looked on it, it seemed to change, to fade slowly, till the features grew sharp and drawn and the sparkling eyes took on that look of hopeless sadness that haunted me, and I knew I held what once was the portrait of the woman whose life was ebbing away in the ward below.

All her thought was still of her lover, her husband; all her pity for him. The dark side of his nature had never touched her consciousness. She believed the tale he had told her; others were guilty, and he had to pay; and when the proofs grew strong and her people pressed them on her, she took her little one and went out into the world alone to work and wait "for Will." Then the

darkness closed in on her; the child died, and she—well, there she lay, still waiting, with that dumb, patient look in her eyes—waiting for Will.

Colonial laws are naturally more elastic than those of the Empire, and influence, judiciously used, will accomplish much; so I decided that, if the thing could be done, she should see the man before she died, even if I had to bring him down country under a fresh indictment for the old Nassirabhad affair. My plans, however, were entirely upset by the information I received from the Police Department to the effect that my man had broken jail two months previously, after wounding a native keeper so seriously that the man had since died; also, that, although the police were looking for him all over India, they had failed to take him. He was wanted badly; but as he was known to have had money at the time of his escape, it was thought that he had got clean out of the country.

A few days after this I made another of my frequent trips to Poona. I was in that restless state between hope and fear, and I am afraid that I must have been a distinctly

uncomfortable guest. I was jealous of every man that my lady smiled upon, and, being an ideal hostess, she naturally smiled on many. There was one man in particular who seemed to get more than his due share, and, while I cursed him in my throat, I could not but see that he deserved his good luck.

I avoided an introduction, but watched him furtively, and as I noted his tall, well-knit figure, his bronzed, bearded face and the charming grace with which he moved among his fellow guests, my heart grew cold and sick within me.

I asked Charlie about him, and he told me that he was an American and a traveler, "an awfully good sort, don't you know? Had letters or something to the governor." I pulled away savagely at my cigar, while Charlie eyed me narrowly awhile, then whispered: "Poor old Dickey! I'm damned sorry, old man; but see here, why don't you go in and see the thing out? By gad! if I loved a girl I'd fight till I dropped, and here you're letting him have a walkover. I'll swear she was all right a couple of weeks ago, and then you just dropped the game. What do you suppose she thinks?"

I looked at him a moment, then grasped his hand. "Thanks, old man. Come in and introduce me to him." And all my life I was glad that I spoke that moment and meant to fight for my love. Two minutes later and I should have felt like a coward to the end of the chapter.

We were sitting out on the veranda, and in the background, through the open windows, came the hum of voices and the clatter of cups and glasses, as early tea was being served in the gloaming. Then came a chorus of "Oh, yes, please do, please do!" A few opening notes on the piano, bold, dashing accompaniment and then a man's voice rose, pure and strong——

> "Here will I pledge thee, dearest one,
> Here will I vow when day is done;
> Darker the shadows fall on the trees,
> Stirred to and fro by the evening breeze."

And as the refrain came ringing out, "True, true till death!" I suddenly went dizzy and clutched Charlie's arm. What was it? What did it mean—that voice—in this house—after many years?

"Who is it?" I whispered, hoarsely.

"Why, Dickey, what ails you, man? That's Ransome, the chap you're going in to meet."

"The—the—— Oh, my God!" I gasped. "Come up stairs, quick. I'm not ill or mad, but I want your help." And then I told him the whole story of my poker game, my meeting with Greenie, the theft of the money and all the after events.

He grew very grave and stern. "But are you certain this is the man? Other men may have similar voices."

"Certain? Why, I'd swear to it among ten thousand. Besides, the man's personality is the same—he fascinates everybody here, just as he did me out there."

"Yes, yes, I know. But how are we going to prove it? You see, he is our guest, and if he denied the whole matter, even plausibly, think how the governor would feel. Besides, if you couldn't prove your case, what would Dolly think?"

"Wait, wait a minute; let me think." I sat quite still, thinking hard, and then like a flash it came. "Stay here, Charlie, and I'll be back in twenty minutes."

I left the house and grounds, and, making a short cut through the bazaar, got to the

police station. A few moment's conversation showed me that I was on the right track, for the portrait of Greenie, alias half a dozen things, murderer, forger, thief, was there for indentification. I easily obtained a copy representing that, as I was traveling considerably, I might come across the original and claim the reward that was out for his apprehension.

Ten minutes later even Charlie was satisfied. The portrait was a comparatively late one, with the mustache, and to those looking for the likeness the beard presented little difficulty in the shape of a disguise,

We sat and talked the thing out from all sides, and finally settled our plan of action. I lighted a cigar and strolled in a secluded part of the grounds, while Charlie went indoors to snare the game.

Presently they came strolling out and caught up with me. Charlie linked his arm in mine and said, "Ah, Dick, let me introduce you to——"

"No need," I broke in. "Mr. Greenie and I have met before, I think." As I mentioned his name we both looked him straight in the eyes, and we saw the sudden start, the look

of hunted horror, and for a moment his hand went to his throat and tore at his collar; then, with an effort, he recovered and stood at bay. But it was too late; he knew that he had betrayed himself. He moistened his lips with his tongue, then said with hardly a tremor, "Well, gentlemen, what is your pleasure?"

As he spoke his hand suddenly went up, and we found ourselves looking down the barrel of a revolver. For an instant we were dumfounded and then the man slowly lowered the weapon and said: "Gentlemen, the game's up, and I know it, but for the sake of —well, the sake of my host (I think he meant hostess) keep the thing quiet and get me out of this. I'll go with you anywhere, even back to jail—and you know what that means—but for God's sake do the thing decently."

That night we three caught the fast mail for Bombay, and during the trip Greenie told us freely the story of his life, sparing nothing. He told of his first fall, when he had been stranded at Nassirabhad, and how he had gone from bad to worse. He evidently had not recognized me, and I kept silence.

On his escape from jail he had forged several letters and presented them to various

gentlemen, feeling that his only hope of escaping detection was by living among a class that would be above police surveillance. Later he had done his best to interest Miss Henderson, with the intention of throwing himself on her mercy and gaining her financial aid to escape from the country.

It was a cowardly thing, but then I suppose the man had some excuse, as he was fighting for his life. We told him of his wife and what we wished him to do, and I caught sight of a tear in his eyes as he hastily pulled his cap over them, and then he grew suddenly silent and would talk no more.

She died in his arms just as the dawn came creeping in, but before she left us, the hungry look had left her solemn eyes, and they shone in the perfect peace of satisfied love.

That night a boat pulled out in the dark to a tramp steamer that was lying with steam up, well out in the bay. On getting alongside one of the three men in the boat climbed to the rope ladder and turned to bid the others good-by. His voice was hoarse with emotion as he did so. "There, there," growled Charlie, almost unmanned himself, "it's all right. Good luck. Good-by."

But I reached up at the last moment and passed the little locket to his hand. I think he knew it by the touch; at least, he gave a half-startled cry and bent forward toward me, staring hard, and as we pushed off I heard him mutter, "Oh, my God, my God!"

I wonder if we did wrong? We felt like two felons as we sneaked up to our rooms at the Byculla Hotel that night, but my wife says that she would have done exactly the same.

We have had several letters from Greenie, written under what is, I hope, his last alias. He is doing well in a new country, and, what is more, he has almost entirely refunded the money that Charlie and I advanced him to start again with.

Perhaps he ought to have been hanged, but I doubt it.

A TIGER EPISODE.

A TIGER EPISODE.

Remember it? What a question! It's ten years gone, and more, yet I wake in the night with the cold sweat pouring from me and the echo of that last awful cry ringing in my ears. Forget it? I wish to God that I could, but—well, this is the story. We were stationed at Nassirabhad, the hottest and slowest hole in the whole Indian Empire. The only thing to break the awful monotony was hunting, and after two years there I was naturally something of an expert. Game, outside round the Ajmere hills, was pretty thick—that is, deer, neilghai and such like—while well up Chandi way there were lots of tigers to be had for the potting.

Now, when one of the officers goes off a-hunting he generally picks on one of us "Tommies" who knows the ropes and takes us along. As there's generally tidy good pickings for Tommy, the job is well liked; so when young Simpson—our latest sub.—asked

me to go along and show him around, why, I naturally jumps at it, and packs my kit before I knew where we were bound. When I heard no other place than Chandi jungle was to be our stamping ground I kind of squirmed a little, 'cause I'd been there before, and knew the particular kind of hell it was. It's full of tigers, and they're always hungry. Why, when the locomotive is plugging up the hill at night the stokers have to throw open the fire box door and let out the light, so as to scare the brutes off with the glare, on the outside of that little patch of jungle; and half a dozen Parsee firemen have been clawed off the tender by the brutes as the engine grunted past. The hill is so steep there that you can't make more than twelve miles an hour with those rattletrap locomotives, anyway.

Of course I wasn't frightened; but taking a beginner out to a place like that isn't fun. There's no telling what a fellow'll do when stacked up against big game for the first time; the finest shots in the world will go to pieces at their first sniff of a tiger or hathi—not that elephants are particularly dangerous—but when your finest pigeon and target

shots tremble so they can't hit a deer at fifty yards, it's no joke to take a beginner up in the woods at Chandi. I tried to hold him, but he wouldn't hear of it; told me as how he had promised a skin to a young lady back home for her birthday, and a skin he was going to have. So we started.

We took the night express and dropped off early in the morning at Chandi village, where I got the stuff for our camp, a bundle of bamboos, some stout cord and a young kid for bait. We then struck across country, —keeping well in the open—for the Chandi River, a little half dried-up stream that quenches the thirst of more tigers in a week than all the other rivers in a month. We crossed this stream about three in the afternoon, and on the edge of the jungle I found a young banyan tree, up which I scrambled with the help of the youngster, and in a short time had hacked a space clear to fix my bamboos, which I nailed and lashed into a kind of platform, strong and roomy enough to hold us both comfortably. Then I slipped down by a knotted rope which was to serve us as a ladder.

Next we drove a stake deep down in the

bank of the stream, and tied the kid to it, scratching its hind leg with a knife so it would bleat; and, having chucked our grub, blankets and rifles up, we shinned up the rope ourselves, and made everything comfortable. Then I began to breathe a little easier; for it would take a pretty clever tiger to get at us up there.

We ate a hearty meal and had a good slug of brandy to keep the chills off; then we lay smoking and talking in whispers, lying flat on our bellies, with our eyes and our Martinis sighted on the vague form of the kid that was dimly visible in the gloom.

I think maybe I got a trifle drowsy; anyway, my eyes were so misty that I lost sight of the tip of the gun and the kid altogether. Then there was a loud rustle, and I was back in Chandi jungle with a jump that fetched my heart into my mouth. But it wasn't a tiger, just a ring buck; but say, what a buck! In all my hunting days in India I never clapped eyes on his equal. He stood for a moment sniffing kind of suspicious, then walked up to the kid and began nosing it. I felt Simpson stir in the shadow where he lay, and the next moment his Martini spoke and the

buck dropped—a fine shot, yes; but he had such good light he couldn't miss it. So far it was all right, but what next?

"Jones," says he, "keep a good watch out; I must have that skin before a tiger spoils it. I never saw such a fine one in all my life, and I wouldn't miss it for a fortune."

An' he up's to go down the tree. Well, s'wel'p me! you might have knocked me down with a feather.

That blasted kid had been howling for a tiger to come and eat him for an hour an' more; and now this crack-brained idiot must go and add himself to the brute's supper!

Well, I raved and prayed and I cursed at him; it wasn't a bit of good; his British blood was up, and, like thousands of other youngsters who make the backbone and glory of our army and navy, he didn't know what fear was, but just grinned. They're great daredevil fighters, but they haven't got any more sense than a suckling calf. There's only two places on earth where they can be safely trusted—in bed and leading a forlorn hope. When I saw he was bent on it I just gritted my teeth and pulled up my gun as he slid down the rope. In two minutes he had skip-

ped over the stream and had his knife at work on the buck, the kid meantime trying to pall up to him as if he was its mother.

Well, sir, I just lay there with the muzzle of my gun sighted on his head—when the thumping of my heart didn't shake it off. If the tiger would only try to sneak out on him —for I felt an awful certainty that he would come—I could save him; but if the brute sprang, God help him! Not a man in the Empire could pot a tiger on the jump, except by a fluke.

As he knelt there in the moonlight I saw him push back from his side the scabbard of an Indian tulwar—a present, I believe, from the Rajah of Ajmere—to prevent the blood from staining it. While I was admiring his coolness and cursing his cussedness, even at that moment there was the flash of a long black shadow across the moonlit space, the whirl of a flying body and a huge tigress flung herself on him.

She overshot the mark, and would have cleared his stooping form and given me a chance, but he must have felt, rather than seen, the danger. With one desperate wrench he drew the sword from its sheath in a long

upward sweep that caught the brute fair in the middle, and clove it clean through flesh and muscle to the backbone.

There was a frightful cry of rage, and as the beast's great hind paw contracted in death agony it caught poor Simpson's skull, literally tearing it off. With an awful haunting cry he fell down across the buck, and the three lay there dead, while the kid cowered away, bleating with fear.

Yes, I think I went mad then. Hunger at last drove me down from the tree two days after. How I got to the railroad track I don't know; but the express stopped, and the hands brought Simpson's body in. I lay in hospital with brain fever for nearly three months, then they shipped me home.

I'm a married man now and have little ones round me, and much of the horror has worn away; but the sight of the harvest moon brings on a fit of trembling that all the love of the wife can scarce quiet.

ALMOST A TRAGEDY.

ALMOST A TRAGEDY.

Nulla Hamet came out of his bake house bearing aloft in his fat brown arms a great tray of the sweetmeats for which he was so justly famous in the Boree Bazaar, and, calling to his wife, he set the tray down to cool in the breeze that fanned his tiny square of yard.

Nulla was fat and prosaic and forty, and had made his mark and filled a big bag first with pice, then with annas and finally rupees, even before he had met Narka, his young wife. Before he met her all his pride and love had been fixed, steadfast and unwavering, in his little back bake house, where he presided like a fat brown god over the pots and pans, and where his magic brought into being savory cakes of ghee and rice, so delicious that even the Memsahibs sent to buy, and spiced sweetmeats that melted on the tongue and ravished the palate.

Day and night he lived among his pies,

until their sweetness seemed to have permeated all his rotund personality. But when at last his great ambition was an accomplished fact and the bag filled to the brim with honest, if somewhat dirty, rupees, he began to realize that he was getting old, that he was exceedingly fat and that his breathing was on occasions somewhat short. These and various other motives determined him to seek a wife. The result was Narka.

The girl was lovely, graceful and delicate as a palm frond, velvet-skinned and supple, and when Nulla married her she was a tall, dignified woman of fifteen. And he didn't have much trouble with his wooing, either. What part the reputed bag of rupees played in the matter, who shall say? But Narka's father welcomed Nulla with both hands and eagerly made ready the shadi, according to the Mussulman law. The girl was told to prepare for the change in her life, and, following her habits of obedience, she bowed her head, and the next day went to the temple for purification.

As she walked swiftly homeward through the tortuous, swarming streets, moving with long, light steps over the narrow pavement,

now and again answering some salutation or congratulation—for the news had already spread—a figure stepped quickly out from the shadow of an old doorway and followed her. She started and trembled, the dark blood suffusing her brown cheeks as a voice whispered in her ear, "Is it true, Narka?"

He was tall and slim and comely, full of the sensuous magnetism of youth and perfect health. His eyes glanced smiling question from a tangle of curly black hair as he walked beside her.

Narka gave one quick glance, then dropped her eyes again. "Yes, Selim, it is true."

"Ache bibi, it is well—for thee. They say old Nulla has many gold mohurs, and surely he will fill thy stomach with sweetmeats and much ghee, so that in time thou wilt become fat, even as he. Yes, thou dost well, thou pretty bul-bul—but what of me?"

A few nights later Nulla took home his bride with much fanfaronade. The whole bazaar turned out to honor the procession—nautch girls danced and singers sang, chanting the virtues of the happy pair, to the accompaniment of cymbals, tom-toms and much other weird music. Nulla rode in

stately pride at the head of the procession, and the torches' flare lit on many a jewel that the bunniahs had lent for the occasion—aye, and once flashed on a falling tear as the bride shrank back from the inquisitive glare.

And long after Nulla and his bride had passed within their own door the bazaar kept carnival, for Nulla had bestowed his baksheesh with a free hand. There was much dancing and singing and laughter, and Nulla's hired men showered sweetmeats on the crowd till even the babies could eat no more. And gayest of the gay was Selim.

So Narka went to the home of Nulla, and his love for her grew day by day, until she became as the light of his life. He preferred the taste of the curry stuff and dhall that her pretty brown fingers had touched, and privately thought her sweetmeats infinitely sweeter than his own.

He was little better than a well-to-do coolie, after all, and their house was small and dark, the rooms ever smoky and full of the smell of cooking—decidedly a poor setting for such a pretty gem as Narka. Still, she was used to no better, and quickly slipped into the dignity of her position and be-

gan to take pride in the arrangement of her new domain.

No, it wasn't much of a place—three or four badly lighted rooms, covered with a few rough pieces of matting; a strong box or two, a couple of tables, with legs of jungle wood, and a few other rough bamboo articles completed the furniture, while hanging from the smoke-black rafters were vessels of ghee (clarified butter) and rough sugar, which, if placed on the floor, were likely to be attacked by ants. Not much of a place, but such as it was she was its mistress, and it filled her with a sense of pride that drove away the shadow of many another unwelcome thought.

And Nulla would come in from his ovens to gaze at her as she tripped about her kitchen work, the big silver anklets making music for her pretty, slender, naked feet; but always before he could gaze his fill the tyrannical pies would demand his presence again.

Later the baby came, a fine, chubby boy. And Nulla's cup seemed full as the tiny mite of humanity crowed and spluttered in his arms; and, full of gratitude, he went to the temple and offered sacrifice.

"Narka bibi, watch the tray, sweet, or my

rotis will burn;" and he hurried back to the ovens, while Narka busied herself with the sweetmeats that were ordered for a great tamasha.

"Who think you I saw to-day?" he asked, returning.

"Nay, I cannot say."

"Hech, hech, thy old friend, the boy Selim. He has been away at Lahore, as thou knowest, and spoke me to-day. He will call and see his old playmate—— Ah, child, what is it? Burned thy pretty fingers? Nay, nay, rest a moment. See thy son, thy sturdy son, would kiss thee better."

"It's nothing. Only a little burn, and I am foolish. The rains are due, and you know how hardly they affect me for a while. Nay, do not stay; I smell my foolish bread again."

Ah, Nulla, you poor fool, to bring that young hawk to your dovecote! Stand aside, you round, fat ball—or, better still, go back to your ghee and your curry stuff. Your head is too simple and your soul too honest to understand a traitor.

So Selim came, and laughed and joked and played with the baby, while Nulla looked on with beaming face and rallied his wife at

night because of her coldness to their guest. His whole being was full of love for her, and he had no idea in his simple soul but that she was equally wrapped up in him. Only Selim smiled at the baby and showed his white teeth.

And Narka struggled and fluttered like a bird in the toils of a snake. Though only a poor, ignorant little coolie girl, she was molded for better things than the gutter. But in Selim's hands she was well-nigh helpless. He played upon her with his subtle, magnetic force and moved her almost as he would; but even when he thought her won something in the girl rose up—the diviner self that leavened her—and baffled him.

Once or twice he spoke to her of the chest where Nulla was reported to have secured his wonderful wealth, questioned her jokingly as to its value; but as she knew nothing, there was nothing to tell, and he turned his attention to Nulla himself. His host, however, though talkative—even garrulous on most subjects—had all the coolie's caution where his rupees were concerned, and, when pressed, would blankly deny their existence. He kept the usual ring of keys hanging from

his waist, and Selim had eyed them hungrily many a time, endeavoring to fix on the one that most probably would fit the box.

Any ordinary box would have given him no trouble, as he was skilled in such little matters; but this particular one was made cunningly and with skillful craft, and hitherto had baffled all his surreptitious attempts at investigation. Meantime he continued his relations with both Nulla and his wife and waited for his opportunity.

Narka was wretched. Selim's strong magnetic personality appealed to her own at every point, and his vivacity, wit and graceful manners were in such utter and continual contrast to poor old Nulla's heavy good nature that gradually something like contempt rose in the heart of the girl toward her husband. His simple, stupid good-nature and continual tenderness irritated her, while Selim, by his subtle methods, gradually gained more and more ascendency over her. He rarely made open love—that would have startled the girl. Sometimes he would not see her for days, then a glance, a whispered word or a spray of white jasmine—that was all. But the warm, passionate nature of the girl re-

sponded continually, even against her waking knowledge of higher things.

Once or twice she made loyal though weak attempts to open Nulla's eyes, but he simply would not understand; instead he rebuked her sharply for her seeming lack of friendship toward the young man. And then she held her peace. Everything seemed in league against her; even the baby would cry for Selim—aye, and leave her mother arms to be tossed in the air and caressed; to ride aloft on the broad, strong shoulders, laughing with baby glee, its fat, dimpled fingers buried in the man's black curls.

Of course the baby loved him—women and children always did; but many a man, given a favorable opportunity, gladly would have proved his hate. And Selim knew it, but only smiled his careless smile, for he knew that threatened men live long.

Now, one hot day, Nulla was taking his afternoon siesta in the corner of the yard, under the banana tree, whose great cool leaves fanned him as he lay. His son, the baby Lasha, had been rolling over him and had chanced upon the ring of keys, with which he was highly delighted. So Nulla

took off the ring and watched the baby playing with it, till finally, growing drowsy, he fell asleep.

It was the hour that Selim often chose to steal into the quiet house and talk to Narka. They were there now, and his wooing had grown bolder and the haunted look in her eyes more pathetic.

"My beautiful queen, you say nothing," he whispered in his softest tone.

A faint flush rose to her cheeks and she dropped her head, then caught her breath with a half-sob. She would, yet—yet——. But Allah was far away and fearful, and she was all alone and did not understand. She half-turned toward him—he was so strong and wise, so brave and true. Ah, he was indeed a god worth worshipping! And as she turned there came the patter of tiny baby feet, accompanied by many a gurgle of delight and the jingle of keys.

In an instant Selim's sharp eyes had taken in the whole situation, and the baby was in his arms; but the crows of delight changed to wails of sorrow and anger as the precious jingling keys were wrenched roughly away.

"Here, Narka, quick! Take the child and

hush him," Selim said in great excitement.

The baby was tossed into her lap, and the man crept stealthily out to the yard. Yes, there was Nulla, sleeping the sleep of the just, his hands folded placidly over his fat chest.

The next moment Selim was back, and throwing off all ambiguity, he caught the girl in his arms, showering hot kisses on her hair, her face and hands. "Narka, my queen, my love, come with me, quick! Will you come?"

The girl lay back, dazed, listening to his passionate pleading as in a dream, till she heard: "See, sweet, the keys of the money box. We shall be rich. Quick, my little one! There, let me go!"

But the girl clung to him desperately now, her eyes filled with horror. "No, no, Selim, if you love me, do not touch the gold. Think, he is an old man, thy friend—and—and he has been good to me. Ah, Selim, spare him something——"

"You little fool!" he hissed, "how should we live? Besides, he has more. Let me go, you fool!"

"Arre, no, no! See, I will work for thee

till——" but he thrust her from him with a snarl and made for the box.

Once more Narka sprang to him, twisting her arms round his neck, and begged and pleaded. "I love you, I love you. I will follow you—work, beg, starve for you; but spare him, spare him, for his days are many!"

As she clung and prayed and Selim struggled to unloose her hold a shadow fell across the doorway and swayed uncertain, back and forth, on the mud wall. Both were too engrossed to see it till a baby's shrill cry roused them, and little Lasah ran weeping to his mother's aid.

Selim half-turned at the frightened baby's cry, to hush it; then saw that great swaying shadow. With an oath he wrenched himself free, and, striking Narka a blow, he sprang to the door and out beyond poor Nulla, who stood, shivering and swaying, at the lintel as though struck by the chill of death.

When Narka came back from the land of dreams she found her baby watching her and Nulla tending her with loving words and gentle service. And as she saw them so she cursed herself and would have died, but love restrained her.

Nulla never told her what he had heard at the door; but when she clung to him in the darkness of the night and whispered it all out in sobbing gasps great tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Narka, Narka," he murmured, brokenly, "you never loved me, never loved me, and I could not blame you."

"Ah, forgive, forgive!" she sobbed. "I know now what I have lost. But let me be thy slave; do not put me away from thee or I shall die."

She could not finish, for he caught her to his heart and held her close, knowing that, despite all, it was his fate to love her always. And as he held her thus their lips met, and she knew that she was forgiven.

And Selim? He left Bombay and passed forever out of their lives. It was inconvenient —for him. Still, what matter? He was young and comely as a sun-god; and—well, there were other girls as pretty and perhaps more foolish everywhere.

THE SIGN OF TARI PENNU.

THE SIGN OF TARI PENNU.

He stood on a hill over against the British camp and defied the whole army—infantry, cavalry and artillery—to moral combat in such picturesquely blasphemous language as only a crazy hillsman would be capable of; this was followed by the crack of his jezail and the ping of flying bullets; and though nobody was hurt, still the camp was in a state of continual confusion, and all owing to a crazy fanatic who fancied he had a grudge against us, saved up probably, from the first Afghan war.

We had been under canvas for two months among the foot-hills, and for the last week of that time had been kept awake night after night by the energetic gentleman on top of the hill; the first couple of nights it was looked on as a huge joke, many of the men cheering him on and encouraging him in bad Hindostanie, but when the racket kept up night after night, and the chap began to get

his eye in, so that the bullets occasionally ripped through the tents, they weren't quite so complaisant and various attempts were made to dislodge him. But when we had made a long and painful detour and come to the spot—as near as we could judge—where he had last been heard from, we would hear the faint echo of his jeering curses wind-borne from the opposite hillside. He was a regular will-o-wisp, and while the men grumbled and cursed—as became British soldiers—at the long, fruitless tramps after the enemy, still, I doubt even had they got a fair sight on him, if he would have been hit, such was their half angry admiration for his stupendous cheek.

But there came a night when his luck deserted him; a night when the moon cast a half cloudy light over the camp and we were wondering if we were to hear from our enterprising friend or not; not that he was given to disappointing us, but so far his seances had been dark ones and we had been expecting that the new moon would put a limit to his mad pranks; but suddenly on the night air were borne the first shrill notes of our usual nocturnal concert, "Yaa-ahya yaa-ahaua-

yaa," a long, dismally wailing cry, followed by, "Ya-a-a, Kuttae ke buchae hither aow, hither aow aum bolta," which being translated means something like, "Yah, you sons of dogs, come out; come out I say!"

Then followed the regular invidious remarks regarding our great-grandmothers, our aunt's sister's cousins, etc., together with concise information concerning their present place of abode; and so on down the family tree to our most unworthy selves, who were apparently following successfully in our illustrious progenitor's unhallowed footprints.

These unkind observations were punctured by the crack of his rifle, and the occasional zing of a bullet over our heads naturally added to the interest of the entertainment. But suddenly, sharp and clear over among the hills, rang out the report of a Martini; a Mahratta curse ended in a cry of agony, and somewhere back in the shadow of the woods we heard the sound of a body falling headlong.

The next morning a fatigue party brought him in, and he was laid out on the parade ground; a fine looking, well-put-up youngster, and on his chest was traced, in thin blue

lines, a square and in the square a strange looking symbol or hieroglyphic.

Some of the Sepoys were called up to say, if possible, who he was, or to what tribe he belonged, but all except one old water carrier seemed ignorant, and though they made various suggestions regarding him, they were all too palpably guesses to be treated seriously.

Roglam, the old water carrier, however, had more to say; he had been something of a wanderer in his time and spoke of a powerful tribe or rather aboriginal race, living in the fastnesses of the hills. The Khonds had never been tributary, and had held their own against Hindu and Mussulman, Persian and Afghan alike, swooping down on the plains with a wild barbaric rush, and crossing arms with the warriors of the great Augunzermund himself; then, ere that giant could grasp and crush them, they would melt away, like a frosty breath in the sunlight, and if pursued, the rocks would fall upon the enemy. Aye, and report said that mighty mountain storms would rise and howl and sweep the rocky passes clean as a sun-bleached bone; for their high priest the great Janni was the ser-

vant of Tari Pennu, the earth goddess, who ruled the rocks, and her husband Boora, the master of the stormy winds.

While wandering over the eastern chain of Ghauts, old Roglam had come on a Khond village and being poor and peaceful they had received him kindly and allowed him to stay among them and eat and drink in peace. And there was a feast of Tari Pennu while he still dwelt there, and he was permitted to sit without the sacred circle in their temple, which was merely a great altar for sacrifice, in a grove of trees that axe had never touched, and had seen the Janni mark a young man with the same square and inner sign that was on the chest of this dead youth, and then the waiting multitude fell down worshipping the young man, for the Janni said that Tari Pennu had accepted him, and that he was a sacred meriah from henceforth. And the man's kin stood forth and swore that should any one harm him they would avenge him or themselves die by their own hands. The young man was then turned loose to follow his own sweet will, and all Khonds would minister to his wants till Tari Pennu called him, when he would return to

his altar and give up his life to his people.

Such was the pith of the story old Roglam told in the orderly room, and I, being on guard there, heard it with my own ears, and saw the colonel glance at Lieutenant Wilson, and saw the lieutenant shrug his shoulders.

They questioned Roglam closely, but he evidently spoke in good faith, and said further that he had met these holy ones, or meriahs, many times in his travels, and that they all were marked with the sign of Tari Pennu, that they married and lived like other men, and that when their children were born they also became meriahs, and were so marked, and after that, none other than the son or daughter of a slain meriah might avenge him, not even the Janni himself, and if within a certain time they did not, then their own life was forfeit in place of the slayer's.

This was all we could get from the old fellow, and after so much had come out, the rest of the natives turned shy of the body, and it was buried that afternoon just outside camp by English privates.

Before night the story of the man's end was known all over camp. Lieutenant Wilson had been out after game among the foot-hills

that afternoon, and was returning in the late evening smoking a cigar when a bullet whistled past his head; he didn't wait for another, but dropped in his tracks and rolled noiselessly among the bushes for a few yards. The ruse succeeded, for, though all was silent for a few minutes, the wild chant that he knew by heart soon rose wailing on the wind, and he could hear the bushes parting as the man came to find what loot there was on the hated "Gora walla" he had shot. Wilson tried to stalk him and take him prisoner, but the man's eyes and ears were too quick, and he got a bullet that ripped his puggery up for his pains and then the crazed man rushed him like a mad boar, with a wicked looking knife in his hand. There was no other way, so the soldier fired, and the man, with a horrible broken curse went reeling back, his body crashing through the underbrush. Then all was still.

That night the whole camp settled down to rest after taps with the conviction that all the fun was over, and a feeling of half pity for the poor devil who had provided it to his cost.

I, (then a lance-corporal) was doing sentry-

go among the officer's tents and am ready to swear that not the shadow of a cat could have entered the lines at that point while I was on duty. The guard was relieved at midnight and I was just turning in when the silence was broken by the wild wail we had learned to know so well. What was it? the voice of the dead hillsman? In an instant the whole camp was in commotion; never before had the cry roused such excitement; it seemed to wake the whole brigade instantly to active life. From all quarters of the camp the men came with a rush; lights gleamed everywhere; hoarse calls to order met with no response, while the elephants of the battery, catching the fever, added their wild trumpeting to the general confusion, and a half-asleep young troop-bugler sounding "boots and saddles' completed the business.

For ten minutes pandemonium reigned then discipline began to tell and gradually the men formed companies under the sharp stern orders of their officers, and stood to attention out there on the parade ground.

I doubt if such a queer looking lot of soldiers ever gathered on parade before; from the colonel down their garb was unique, if

not quite up to army regulations. There were not three pairs of trowsers in my whole company, and I remember the tension in our vicinity was relieved just at the right moment by the second lieutenant as he came down the line in a brother officer's helmet, shouting at the men, his sword drawn and waving majestically, while the top half of his pajamas flapped about his very slender shanks. It was just enough, and a loud guffaw ran down the line.

Meantime the usual stream of curses, with now and again the crack of that vicious old rifle, came floating down to us, and continued long after order had been restored and the men were under cover again.

I lay listening to the weird cry that faintly penetrated to the guard tent, and through the blanket that I had drawn up round my ears to shut it out. Towards dawn I must have fallen asleep, for I woke with a start to find Jones, the man who had relieved me at midnight, bending over me and shaking me.

"Hello Tom, what's up now?"

"Say Bill, dress quick and come outside. There's been some queer game on last night; step easy and don't wake the chaps till we

see what to do. Careful, don't make a noise."

I dressed in a hurry and followed him out into the chilly dawn, and on till we came to the first lieutenant's tent, and there I stood in open mouthed astonishment ; for fastened across the flap of the tent was a piece of old yellow linen and stained on it was a great square and in the center of the square, the same mark that we had seen on the dead hillsman's chest.

"Well, what d'ye think of that fur divil's work, eh, Bill ?"

"Blest if I know, old man," I whispered back. "Better run in and report ; I'll stay here till you come back."

Five minutes later the sergeant of the guard was on the spot and, receiving no answer to his calls, he raised the flap of the tent and peered cautiously in, while we gathered close, fearing we knew not what. Our alarm vanished quickly, for the sickly gleam of the hanging lamp, struggling feebly with the growing dawn, fell on the face of the young officer sleeping peacefully on his cot, and the whole interior of the tent was so evidently undisturbed that we withdrew without waking him and the orderly

officer having been notified of the matter, quietly took down the linen and after ordering the strictest silence on the subject, went to the colonel's tent.

A little later the reveille sounded and the camp was in the throes of waking; my immediate duties took up all my attention for the next hour, but directly after breakfast fatigue parties were ordered out to scour the hills.

It seemed as if it were going to be the usual thing, but the events of the early morning were enough to keep my interest alive, especially as I was in the command under Lieut. Wilson, and he gradually led us round to the spot where the hillsman had fallen. Here we scattered and began a long search, covering almost every yard of ground, and even beating up the long grass and undergrowth, so determined was the colonel to have the whole woods cleared.

Of course discipline was not very severe; the men straggled and laughed, looking on it as a good exchange from the usual monotonous drill. I was jogging along a few yards to the left of the lieutenant, when suddenly something white caught my eye

back among the rocks; one glance and I threw up my rifle and fired, while at the same instant a puff of smoke broke from the rocks and with a sharp cry Wilson staggered and almost fell, but waved me off as I ran toward him, and led our rush up the hill.

We were fighting mad now, Wilson always had been a favorite with us, and to have a deliberate attempt at murder under our very noses was more than we could stand; yet the sight that met us up there took the fight out of the worst of us, for there was no wild hillsman, but just a poor Mahratta woman writhing in her last moments, while beside her a baby girl crooned over an old rifle that her mother's nerveless hands had dropped.

We stood chilled with a sudden awe, till Wilson grabbed a water bottle and ran toward her; but as she saw him coming her fast glazing eyes grew fierce once more, and when he knelt beside her, she half raised herself and cursed him till our blood ran cold; aye, and would have struck him as he stooped to her, but the child, the baby girl, had drawn near, attracted perhaps by

the glittering buttons on his coat—and with a sudden soft coo, she snuggled in his arms. Then the woman's raised arm fell, her curses were broken with a moan of terror, and she fell back on the rock unconscious.

We did our best to save her, but my bullet had gone too true, and she died within an hour.

Wilson carried the child back to camp in his own arms, despite the pain of his wound, for she would go to no one else. Arrived there, he turned her over to some of his native servants, with whom she grew and throve, as the years passed developing into a comely young girl, and showing an affectionate gratitude for her protector's care that was, under the circumstances, almost pathetic.

In the course of time Wilson sent her away to school at Poonah and in every way showed his intention to make up for her early loss; and, as time and steady work had brought his promotion and he was now at the head of his regiment, with a colonel's epaulets on his shoulders, he was able to command more consideration for the girl than might otherwise have been possible.

While the matter never was referred to between us, still I was conscious of a bond of sympathy between Wilson and myself, ever since that shot that saved his life and killed the child's mother; he had pressed on me the importance of taking a certain number of exams. and to please him I had studied hard, and later my promotion had kept pace for pace with his own. Still never by so much as a hint did I gather what he thought of that strange business, and it was not till the beginning of the sequel that I learned how he brooded over the matter as only a deeply sensitive nature could.

It was during her second term at Poonah that the colonel received a short wild letter from the girl, bidding him goodbye, and in her warm impulsive way, declaring again and again her gratitude to and her love for him; but of where or why she was going, there was but one word and that was—fate; her fate had overtaken her and she must follow it though it made her heart bleed to leave her friend—her master.

I saw the colonel's dogcart with the big roan in a white lather, dashing down the station road; he usually was thoughtful of

his beasts, but he was lashing the roan through the mid-day heat as though the fiend were in him, and his sais told me later that he had managed to jump aboard the express just as it was steaming out of the station.

On his return he sent for me and told me what he knew and what he suspected, and it was a short story. The principal of the school had no clue whatever, in fact the girl was only missed when he arrived; every one, the police included, was completely in the dark. I learned for the first time that the girl was marked with the mysterious sign; that she had complained several times of some strange force that seemed to possess her and dominate her will and desires. Wilson had laughed at her and tried to shame her out of the idea, but had been most anxious, as he seemed to believe from the beginning that there was some mesmeric force being used on the child, and for this reason he had sent her so far away to school, hoping that the different surroundings would break the influence, if indeed any were at work.

During several subsequent conversations, I found that he had satisfied himself as to

the reality and possible power of the influence symbolized by the sacred sign of the Khonds. During the past years he never had been allowed to forget that he rested under its curse. On several occasions the sign had been conveyed to him mysteriously and intimations given that sooner or later his life would be forfeited. Why they had not struck before seemed doubtful, unless they had determined, as also seemed in keeping with their methods, on making the child whom he loved the avenger of the dead meriah; for the hand that placed the symbol on his breast, while he lay sleeping at the Apollo Hotel in Bombay, might as easily have buried a dagger there.

The thing that seemed to hurt him most however—for he was as sensitive in some things as a woman—was the fact that he always was shunned by the natives; servants —other than trained army men—would not stay with him, and the very children in the bazaars drew away with an awe that the fact of his being "Burra Sahib" could not account for. Once or twice he almost had given up and gone home, but though he was tempted he put the thought away, like the brave

soldier he was, as unworthy, and stayed on and faced his unseen foes as best he might, never knowing what moment the sword would descend. He kept his face bright and his front brave, and if he ever quailed, no man knew.

It seemed to relieve him to talk to me, and we grew closer, as man to man, and I swore in my heart that I would stand by him if ever the time came, though I confess I had not half his reverence for the curse; that there was some jadoo, some deviltry afloat I hardly could doubt, but Lord! we were British soldiers and I at least, despite my experience, had a great leaven of "Tommy's" contempt for the "heathen naygur."

The colonel seemed unable to get over the loss of the girl whom he had grown to love like a daughter, and after ailing for some weeks was suddenly taken ill; he recovered sufficiently to be moved to the hills and I went along, the doctor promising to look us up in a day or so. We found the bungalow prepared for us most comfortable and the servants anxious to stand well with the "Burra Sahib," and I hoped that a couple of weeks of the delightfully cool breezes would

put the invalid on his legs again. Everything seemed so peaceful and quiet after the confinement of the barracks that I think we all slept more confidently than in months before. I had pretty nearly settled in my own mind that the chief cause of the colonel's trouble was overwork, little dreaming that the end was even then upon us.

I noticed on rising one morning that the bungalow was strangely silent, and yet the sun was well up, and on dressing I found that the whole place apparently was deserted. I walked through the compound to the servants quarters, only to find them gone, bag and baggage, while my calls remained unanswered, save by the screaming of the parrots in the mango trees.

Angry and puzzled, I returned to the house and saw the cause of the exodus—it had escaped my eye on leaving—a piece of yellow linen, such as I once before had seen, and on it was stained the square, and inside, the mark of Tari Pennu. I stood staring, half stupefied for a few moments; the thing had come so strangely, like a sudden storm out of a clear sky and it bewildered me.

I was roused by Stephens, the colonel's

Eurasian major domo, who joined me and stood looking at the ugly portent. "Well. that cursed thing's come again, eh!"

"Yes." I answered, "it's come and all those black curs have gone; left us in a pretty fine hole; how we are going to manage is more than I know. How's the colonel this morning?" I added, as I tore the wretched thing down.

"Not so well. I was up several hours in the night with him and that's how I'm so late. I think he's got a slight relapse, and I feel rather anxious about him. When will the doctor be up?"

"Not for several days, worse luck. Better keep this thing quiet; it'll only worry him and do no earthly good."

It proved true; he had a bad relapse and toward afternoon grew delirious; so Stephens and I took turns with him and at the general work of the place. We were thirty miles from the railroad, and had come by dak, so it was useless to think of getting help till the doctor took it into his head to put in an appearance. I was more anxious and worried than I can tell; the least noise made me start, and yet I don't know what I feared.

That night, after rousing Stephens to take his turn with the colonel, I went out on the veranda to have a smoke before turning in; the "cheeks" were half raised and the moon was sailing high overhead, throwing the whole place into sharp contrasts of black and white. A wolf howled dismally away in the shadows, and the occasional cry of some night bird broke sharply on the stillness. Once a jackal trotted out into the moonlit compound, stopped, sniffed a moment with his nose well in the air, then turned tail and scampered back into the shade of the lemon trees. I remember vaguely wondering if he had smelled my tobacco, and then woke with a start as my pipe fell from my hand and rolled on the floor. I was in the act of stretching myself with a yawn, when my arms were arrested half way up, and I nearly jumped out of my chair with fright, for crouched in the shadow of the railing almost at my feet, was a figure—a woman, by her dress.

"Who are you?" I gasped. And then she startled me still more, for she slowly rose and faced me, and it was Loocha, the girl we had lost. At first I did not know her in her native dress, and when I did, she stared

at me so strangely that I was confused, and when I would have touched her, she drew back and waved me off. "Wait! I have much to say." She spoke in the vernacular, and in a low tone questioned me concerning the colonel. I told her all; all my fears for his health and safety, but she interrupted me passionately.

"And is it not just, the curse that follows him? A murderer!"

"What!" I cried in amazement, (I did not know that the story of her parent's tragic end had been kept from her by the colonel) "You reproach him, your friend, your guardian, and he perhaps lies dying?" But she did not soften; only muttered, "He killed my father, and for him, you killed my mother. It is just."

"And why, if you feel so, have you come?" I demanded; "perhaps to gloat over his death," for I was very bitter.

"And if so, it were just." She muttered back.

"Just! just! Child, you do not know what you talk of; leave these things to men; for if this curse be true, he stands, one man who has loved you and grieved for you, against many; there is enough without your added

hand." And then I told her the whole story of her parents' end, and she questioned and doubted but in the end I think, believed; what she had been told by the others I never knew. Then I took her in to see him and she stood looking moodily, with her dress drawn across her face, as he lay moaning in his sleep; and just then he called her. Whether he felt her presence who shall say? But he pleaded with her to come to him and save him; to let him see his little girl just once more before he died. No one listening could have doubted the truth and beauty of his love for the girl, and slowly her head drooped lower and lower, her body swayed and she sank on her knees and, with a sob, touched her lips to his wasted hand. And the sick man smiled in his sleep.

After that we hardly could get her away from his side night or day. I tried to get her to tell what she knew and where she had been; but she grew so nervous under my questions that I was obliged to desist. She took her place at the sick man's side as a matter of course and perhaps I looked on her anxiety too lightly, so easily one grows used to the patient devotion of women to the sick whom

they love—but at length her haggard looks roused my attention, and I determined to send Stephens the next morning to the station for help.

That night I awoke with an uneasy feeling of something wrong, and slipping on a dressing gown, I stepped lightly across to the colonel's room, drew the curtains quietly back and then stood still in surprise. The lights were burning brightly, while Loocha, with her back to me, was bending over the sick man, earnestly engaged in something that engrossed her whole attention. There was a little black case lying on the bed quilt, and I caught the glint of steel in her hand.

I stepped noiselessly behind her, even as she drew back with a sigh of relief which changed to a faint scream as my hand fell on her arm. I gripped her harshly, fearing I knew not what, and then glanced back and forth from the girl to the man, in strange perplexity, for he was sleeping quietly, soundly—the bed clothes rolled down to his waist, while his chest was exposed and swollen with an angry inflammation. Bending closer I saw that the red was touched with purple lines, and the mystery grew plain; he was tattooed with the

familiar mark of the goddess Tari Pennu.

I turned to her fiercely then. "You traitor!"

She looked puzzled for a moment at my anger, then gave her shoulders a weary shrug and stood mutely by while I heaped my fury on her. Her forlornness should have touched me, but I was fearful and so, I am afraid, brutal.

When I demanded an explanation, she drew herself up proudly and with a glance of scorn said, "You have found one for yourself; I will not contradict my Lord." And would say no more.

I took her to her room and locked her in, barring the shutters so she could not escape, and roused Stephens, though the dawn had not yet come, and sent him posting away to the station. Then I went back to the colonel and found him still sleeping quietly. I had no doubt but that drugs had been used; but his pulse was steady and his brow moist. So I waited and watched through the live-long day, taking some food to the girl and laying it inside her door without a word; for my heart was very bitter against her. Once I heard her moving, and listening, caught the sound of quiet sobbing; then all was still.

At dusk I took her more food, and entering, set it down, glancing at the bed as I did so. I could see her lying there, a white heap in the gloom, and something in the quiet misery of the pose, or perhaps it was the memory of those childish sobs, made me pause, and I spoke to her, but she would not answer. So I left her alone in the dark once more. God forgive me! But how could I know? it all looked so black against her.

Late that night Stephens came back and we watched together through the long night, and in the morning the sick man woke with the fever gone, and in his right mind, smiling gladly though feebly at us; and before the sun was up the doctor came too. He had crossed our message and got to us just as the patient had pulled through, but you may be sure we were none the less glad to see him; so glad in fact, that we clean forgot the girl in the quiet, darkened room beyond, till the Colonel himself mentioned her as a dream of his fever.

Then I drew the doctor aside and told him all, and we went together to her room, unlocked the door and entered.

A stray sunbeam had found its way

through the closed shutters, and touched her quietly and lovingly. Something in her attitude struck me then and I turned sick and cold as the doctor, with a sharp exclamation, strode hurriedly to her side. He lifted her gently, touched her eyes, drew back her lips, then laid her down again and sighed, "Poor little maid," and then again, "Poor little maid."

She had been dead for hours. Aye, she must have been passing when I spoke to her the previous evening, and with never a loving word to speed her, she went out on her lonely way.

She left a letter for the Colonel, bidding him goodbye and telling him that it was the only way; that she was bound by the laws of her people to avenge that long past killing, and, when she did not understand, had sworn to do so, or to pay the debt herself. And so she made her choice and set him free because she loved him.

We kept the matter from the Colonel for several months, explaining the marks on his chest as a ruse we had thought of to protect him in case of sudden danger. The doctor took the body away with him to Poonah,

where he saw that it was decently buried.

Both the Colonel and I have been on the pension list many long years. He knows the whole story now. He never was molested again in any way before we left India, and we have come to wonder if the little girl who died so tragically, did not give her life for a shadow after all. She had a delicate, sensitive temperament, and was strangely susceptible to external influences; that they were brought to bear on her in some manner seems beyond doubt, but for us it has remained a closed book. If we had touched on a mystery, it was but one of many such that spring to life in that strange land; and yet none are greater than that world-wide one, that we all know so well, and call love.

THE JADOO OF DR. BARRAMPHUT.

THE JADOO OF DR. BARRAMPHUT.

His name was Barramphut—Dr. Y. Barramphut, a thin swarthy man whose mouth and chin were concealed by a heavy growth of black hair, and whose eyes were equally guarded by a pair of strongly magnifying spectacles. He was introduced one night at our Literary Club, and strangely enough, just as some few of us were discussing the doctrines of a certain Hindoo teacher, who had tarried among us awhile, and who, if he had not made actual converts, certainly had given us much food for thought and debate, and had left us pretty evenly divided in opinion as to whether our late guest was merely a well-read, plausible fakir, or indeed a true teacher of mysteries beyond the common human ken.

The credulity of some of my clubmates astonished me. I had studied our Hindoo friend as a case of mental aberration; being a doctor, the case had interested me, but

when I found that the result of his vaporing was likely to be an epidemic of puerile Oriental, so-called, occultism; that some of my best friends were dieting and going in for courses of breathing and so on, other than those ordained by nature, I gathered the few remaining sensible ones and commenced an active crusade against the spreading evil.

On this particular night there were not more than eight or ten of us gathered in the cozy parlor, and we were in a wide circle round a most material and comfortable fire. Outside, the rain was dashing against the windows with a noise and energy that made it necessary to raise the voice in conversation, and now and again there was a sudden break in our talk when the stormy wind gathered force and came rushing down with a thud and a bang and wrenched at the shutters, and jarred the frame, then drew off and went moaning around the corner like some stricken thing.

We had been talking, I coming last. I had just closed my argument with these words.

"No, gentlemen, the existence of God—which you assert—precludes the possibility of any mere man, however gifted by nature

or learned in art, usurping His power , overturning His laws and dominating his brother men for good or evil as he wills. They may fool the uneducated—the superstitious many —but what about the others, the men of science, the trained observers? If these powers exist, why do they not show themselves to those who can test them? According to Nicarro, our Buddhist friend, they can hear these words—this challenge. Will they answer it? No! These men-gods or men-devils keep well away from Science!"—and here came one of the wind-rushes that shook the house to its very foundations; and as it rushed whirling round the chimney-tops, it seemed to toss the words to and fro and tear them in its eldritch mirth—"From Science, from Science!"

I had paused in my speech at the rush of the storm, and as its wild gust died, I turned half round in my chair and saw Dr. Barramphut standing silently in the doorway.

I suppose he had been announced while the storm was making such a clatter, though I could not help wondering as I looked at his impenetrable face, how much of my speech he had heard as he stood there. His person-

ality was in keeping with the manner of his coming, and both impressed me unfavorably. As he advanced toward the firelit circle a vague impression of disquiet rose in my breast, as though some subtle, inner element recognized an enemy—an answerer of my challenge.

He was introduced by the man who had invited him, and as I answered his salutation, I found myself puzzling as to the kind of eyes that looked out from behind those heavily convex glasses; as it was, I felt at a disadvantage; they were scrutinizing, probing me; seeking out my weak spots, even while the modulated voice spoke gently—"Ah, a brother scientist, most happy, etc." How the devil did he know I was a scientist, unless he guessed it from overhearing my speech while he stood at the door.

The man sat among us there and talked quietly and well; he had evidently been a great traveler, and learning the subject of the evening's discussion, related a number of wonderful incidents which he professed actually to have seen himself, during his wanderings in India and Thibet. These "experiences," as he was pleased to call them, were

for the most part utterly useless violations of the laws of nature, such as throwing a silken rope in the air and then climbing to the top, drawing the slack rope up and again flinging it beyond, and so climbing to the clouds and disappearing. When I expressed incredulity he seemed surprised, and asked if I had never heard of such things before. I acknowledged that I had, but had merely heard of them as vague childish stories, not worth the trouble of an educated man's refutation. Just here the waiter called me to the telephone and I went gladly, as the argument had grown warm and personal and I could not help fancying that the man had some motive in making me lose my temper; he even followed me out into the hall while I was putting on my overcoat and continued his absurd arguments, but I pushed unceremoniously by him and got out to my cab, cursing him under my breath for a crazy old fool.

It was a call from my hospital that had brought me out, and when I got there I found a bad case of compound fracture—of the tibia, if I remember rightly. It was a couple of hours before I was free, and then

seeing that the storm had cleared and it was bright moonlight, I turned up my coat collar and lighting a cigar, set off on a four mile walk home. Now if I had done this once I had done it at least five hundred times before. After the glare and heat, to say nothing of the concentrated attention dependent on a night operation, that solitary walk through the quiet streets was most refreshing.

I was thinking of the surgical case I had just left during the whole distance, and my previous annoyance at our club guest's insistent arguments had entirely vanished, in fact, I don't believe the man entered my mind again till I was putting my night key in the latch, and then a peculiar, repugnant shudder ran through me as I recollected the objectionable spectacles, and I could hardly shake off the feeling that they were glaring at me now, and that the eyes that they hid were full of triumphant malignity. "Bah, the little beast!" I said, pushing the door open.

The gas in the hall was out, and I stood fumbling with my hat and gloves in the darkness; I had just laid them on the hall table, when I stood transfixed with surprise.

There came the clink of glass, and voices, low at first, but growing quickly louder as though in altercation. What did it mean? I drew back the curtains on my right, and peering across the dark room, saw a gleam of bright light through the crack of the curtains that shut off my library. Creeping cautiously across, I had just reached the farther room when a savage voice rang out, "You thief! that's your game, is it? Curse you, take that!" There was a scuffle and a cry as I dragged back the curtains.

I saw a man lean over a falling table and strike another who was sitting opposite, with something that flashed like steel, and the wounded man fell back with a terrible cry, the table crashing on top of him and the decanters, cards and markers flying all over the room. Then the other seized a silk hat from a chair at his side and turned to go out even as I sprang forward to intercept him; he struck at me savagely with the hat, the hard rim catching me over the left eye and fairly staggering me for a moment. I caught at the hat and wrenched it from him, grappling with him at the same time, but he slipped out of my grasp like an eel and was gone. I

started to follow him, but my professional instinct stopped me and I turned back to the wounded man.

Lifting the tablecloth that had covered him, I found myself looking into the hairy and bespectacled face of—Dr. Barramphut. I slipped down on the floor and sat for several moments staring at him before I could recover my nerve; then I examined him. He was quite dead—stabbed to the heart. I rose up, and the trickling of the blood from my cut eye attracted my attention and brought my mind to bear on some other aspects of the case. What was this man doing in my house? in my—Great heavens! that wasn't my writing-desk; and the chair, the lounge—all the furniture was strange! What did it mean? I hastily struck a light and entered the next room; it was utterly unfamiliar, and I realized that I must have entered the wrong house.

I went back and gazed at the silent figure lying there, and as I did so a feeling of compunction rose in me that we had parted so angrily, and from this grew another thought; how was I to explain this matter? Might not some clumsy official of the police think the

evidence against me sufficient to justify my arrest? At any rate, I must not be found here with clothes that I saw, even in this dim light, were all disarranged by my scuffle and spotted with blood from my freely bleeding eye; I would secure, as far as possible, my safety first, and volunteer my information later, when I should be in a position to do so without placing myself in a false light. So with a handkerchief pressed to my forehead, I groped my way out to the front door, closed it quietly and walked hastily away.

When I stopped to consider, it was impossible to understand how I could have mistaken the street for mine—the house was similar and the same fitting key was commonplace—but the street, well, I was quite at fault here; there was no name on the corner, but it certainly bore very little resemblance to Harlow street, where I lived.

After turning several corners, however, I came on a small familiar square and garden, and entered Harlow street at the opposite end from that at which I lived, which seemed to show that I had inadvertently passed round it, and so on to the other house. The explanation hardly satisfied me, but it was

the best I could evolve in my present condition.

Arrived at my own house—which I verified by the number this time, I ran up the steps, felt for my keys and found them gone, and then I remembered that I had laid them and my hat down on the hall table in the strange house. I hastily took off the hat I was wearing; it was not mine. I looked under the lining and the mystery grew, for there was a name that I knew well, Harold French, a young lawyer, and a clubmate and friend of mine.

I didn't ring the bell; I felt that the fewer people who saw me at present the better, but started back to the other house thinking I might find some way of regaining my own hat and keys before they should be discovered by the inmates, if they had not found them already. It was a quarter to three when I left my own door and I walked down one street and up another, round squares innumerable, and at five o'clock I had utterly failed to find the house where the tragedy had taken place. Tired and faint I hired a passing cab and drove to a downtown hotel, determining to see French in the morning and tell him

the whole matter and see what he had to say about his hat.

It was noon before I woke from my deep dreamless sleep, and after taking a cup of coffee, I set out to find my friend. Fortunately I caught sight of him in the club window as I passed, and he met me in the hall with a cheery "Hello Dickon! you're a nice beggar to run off with other folk's clothes; gim'me my hat! Why, what's wrong, old chap? you're as white as a ghost. What is it, Dick?"

I drew him away into the library and told him the whole story. He looked at me gravely, then rang the bell and ordered a decanter of Brandy; after filling two glasses and watching me drink mine he said:

"Look here, old chap, you've got badly off somehow; I don't pretend to understand it, but you couldn't have changed hats at that place, because you left yours here; and Dicky, you couldn't have opened that door with your keys because old Barramphut picked them up on the hearth last night after you'd gone, and he ain't dead—or he wasn't ten minutes ago—'cause I was talking to him. He slept here in the club last night, or rather this morning, as we didn't break up till near-

ly four o'clock; he was showing us some jadoo as he calls it; so while you saw him dead he was entertaining us with some specimens of the black art. As for the other chap—the chap that struck him, I don't know, but it wasn't I, we were all here together."

I stared at him in utter bewilderment; what did he mean? Had I been asleep and dreamed it all? I put my hand to my aching head and my fingers touched the still raw sore; I drew his attention to it; he touched it gravely and then looked at his hat, and we both saw that the brim was broken.

A few minutes later I went into the news room with him and in a sunny corner of one of the windows sat Dr. Barramphut sleeping over a morning paper. As we advanced he woke up and, seeing us, said, "Ah Doctor! I was just dreaming about you. I'm afraid you've had a bad night; I always feel it if my friends do. Why, you've hurt your eye, too! It must have been a regular night-mare. Eh what? Your keys, oh yes, here they are; I picked them up on the hearth. By the bye, I should change that latch key, the pattern is shockingly common."

For the next week I haunted the locality where I believed that strange house to be; I wandered there by night and day but never found it. Despite the recovery of my hat and keys and French's theory that I had been sleep-walking and run into a lamppost and so hurt myself and his hat, deep down in my inner consciousness I knew that this was not the truth. I watched the papers daily for a ghastly headline to tell me that the tragedy was discovered, but no such headline ever appeared, though one morning I found and read the following article which may throw some light on the subject for those who believe in such things; as for me, I am firmly convinced that I shall find that house one day, and a natural solution of the mystery will follow.

"Dr. Barramphut, the Hindoo pundit, gave last evening a most interesting lecture on Eastern magic or "jadoo." The doctor has obtained such a world-wide reputation that the hall was filled with a most representative gathering of scientific men, some twenty of whom formed a committee at the doctor's desire. The lecturer, after describing at length the most prominent and well known

tricks of the Oriental fakirs, stated that they were merely optical illusions, which were brought about by the wholesale hypnotizing of the audience; and then proceeded to demonstrate his theory practically, by hypnotizing his audience (reporters and committee excepted). As far as could be judged from the reporters table, he was perfectly successful, the whole audience applauding on several occasions while the stage was absolutely empty; and so certain were they of the reality of their visions and sensations, that when told later by the reporters that there had been no such phenomena as they imagined, they had smiled and insisted that the newspaper men themselves had been hypnotized or they must have seen. The doctor gave a description of what he called evil jadoo by which a man might be grievously hurt or even killed from a distance by certain mental forces being concentrated on him; this seems the most wonderful of all, and we must take the doctor's word for it, as practical demonstration manifestly was impossible."

THE LOVE OF WOMAN.

"Which, the dark girl with the rose in her hair?"

"Yes."

"Why, that's the redoubtable Cecil Lawrence, surely you've met her. No? Well, she's right up with the band-wagon; come along and I'll introduce you; I've got the next number with her."

"No, thanks, old chap. I don't believe I will; you see I'm so far behind the said band-wagon that I hardly can hear the music. No, I'll keep my downy wings unsinged, Pembroke, and flutter round among my equals."

"Well, perhaps you're right, Martin; she might take a shine to you and then there'd be the deuce to pay—there always is with her somehow."

"As I should imagine—and you?"

"Oh, I, well I'm supposed to be old and cynical and callous. She calls me Uncle and I grin and pretend I like it. Well, ta-ta,

there goes the music! I must not keep her waiting."

Martin Grant looked after his friend and watched him pick his way through a crowd of men and later emerge with the lady of their discourse at his side. He stood back in a friendly doorway and watched the girl as she swung gracefully past to the soft Chopin waltz. He eyed her critically, tried to find some flaw in her but she seemed perfect; the embodiment of every physical attribute that he idealized in woman; but he smiled as he thought—"Well, this is only a calf affair anyway and when the time comes I'll probably love and marry a blonde girl with rosy cheeks and a celestial nose, and yet——."

And then the boy flushed and started awkwardly, for the couple had swept close past him again. He saw Pembroke give the girl an almost imperceptible pressure with his gloved hand and she turned her head and looked straight into the Boy's eyes.

And what the Boy thought was, "No, I don't believe I'll marry a blonde, after all," And what the Girl said was—"Was it that handsome boy standing in the doorway?"

And Pembroke answered "Yes, that's he."

"Well, of course it was very candid of him. What a pity young men so often lack the tact of you more advanced ones, Major!" And with this Parthian shot Miss Lawrence left the Major to ponder over what particular offence had called down the sarcasm on his devoted head.

Now the rule was that Miss Lawrence should pick and choose whom she would or would not know and she kept her circle of recognized admirers sufficiently select to satisfy her somewhat fastidious taste, and it was fastidious if capricious. Among her cancelled engagements were none to which she could not look back with a certain dreamy sadness that was akin to pleasure. There was Prince Ambrose; he was at her side tonight, a trifle aged and worn-looking, perhaps, but as gentle and courteous as ever. And Masters and Saltern of the Navy, and Paul Danton, the writer, and—oh, a score of others. A couple of them had broken roughly, to be sure—squirmed at their medicine—but they had been the ones who easily had consoled themselves. As for the rest—well, they were scattered to the ends of the earth

and they were men too loyal to speak, whatever they thought.

The trouble was that the girl was just as honest as the men while the glamour was over her; it lasted usually from three to six days after the particular object of her interest had descended from his pedestal and begun to grovel; and then, though her whole nature and line of action had demanded submission, it brought her quick disenchantment. Of course, she was spoken of as the most callous of finished coquettes and yet there were few men in her class who would not have eagerly welcomed the opportunity of singeing their wings at her shrine.

At this particular time she was considering the attentions of a young diplomat who, warned by the fate of his predecessors, was hedging his way into her good graces in a manner worthy of his profession. He was a brilliant, cultivated gentleman, refined and scholarly, and withal strong enough to command even Miss Lawrence's interest; and yet she suddenly broke with him, apparently for the sole purpose of being able to give her undivided attention to the Boy's business.

Even to this day it is quite inexplicable to me what such a girl could see in the Boy; he was just a wholesome, handsome young fellow of the usual British type. I think he'd been at Cambridge but I'm not sure, and he had her Majesty's commission to wear a sword. Of course the average school-girl would have thought him a darling and a hero but Cecil Lawrence was a cut above the average school-girl and knew a thing or two about Art and Literature that had been altogether left out of the Boy's education.

He was on a three months vacation before going out to India and had intended spending the time at his father's quiet little vicarage down in Hants; but when she took his affairs in hand she changed all that—not of a set purpose, mind; for I think at that stage she'd have been foolish enough to go down to Hants with him—but because she was so wrapped up in the boy himself that all his surroundings were lost sight of. She asked him once why he had avoided her so persistently—this was long after the avoidance had ceased—and he told her that he realized the first time he saw her that he might love her

so strongly that he was afraid; as he could not possibly hope that she herself would care.

Of course, it was all utterly foolish. She hadn't a penny of her own and it was necessary for her to make a good match; yet the Boy's love-making carried her completely away for the time. You hardly can wonder at it, after all; he was so utterly single of purpose in his devotion; but he said and did things that no man should say or do to any living woman.

And she—well, she gave him her lips and let him touch her hair and called him her Boy, and mind you, I believe she meant it too. And one night the ribbon of her slipper came loose and when she let him fasten it, he kissed it with the same perfection of devotion that he always showed her, and when the time came for their parting she gave him the slipper in memory of the kiss.

He was stationed at Colaba for the time and from there the girl began to get those foolish letters that lonely men will write, and they opened her eyes and made her think and later, write.

That letter showed the truth; for it an-

nounced her engagement to Major Langham.

Now I had come out with the same detachment as Grant; we had foregathered over our pipes on the boat, and later, being both stationed at Colaba, waiting orders, he in cantonment and I at the hospital, we still held together. I think it comforted him a bit to sit and smoke with a man who had known Her, although we never mentioned her name. We would talk all round her—of an evening spent perhaps where she had been, speaking of others freely, but always balking, somehow, at her. Then again, although I was sure he had at least one picture of her, it was never on exhibition; his father's and sister's stood on his dressing case, but I think he kept hers in a secret place along with his Bible that he was still old-fashioned enough to read every day.

Then that cursed letter came. The mail was delivered at the Orderly Room and from there Grant's bearer brought it to his quarters. How the Boy's face brightened as he saw the handwriting! I looked in his eyes for an instant and mine must have

smiled my sympathy, for his smiled back.

"I'll go, Martin."

"Not much you don't, old chap! Excuse me just a moment and I'll be right back." And with his sunny, boyish smile he lifted the dividing bamboo cheeks and disappeared into his bedroom.

I lay back smoking, pulling the terrier's ears and trying to recollect how it felt to be so utterly young as the Boy. I remembered that I had been once and I let my thoughts drift back to the old broken ideals until the glamor of the past closed in over me and I forgot my pipe and the dog and even the happy Boy in the room beyond. And then something waked me and I sat bolt upright with a start; for it sounded for all the world like a smothered sob. It came again; dry, hoarse, almost choking and still with that smothered feeling about it; and then I could stand it no longer.

I crossed to the cheeks:

"Martin!"

No answer. I spoke again, then raised the bamboos and entered. He was lying face down on his cot with his head buried deep in the pillows, and at regular intervals came

that hard, dry sob. I knelt by him and laid my head on his pillow with my arm round his shoulders. He gripped my hand hard once and slowly the sobs grew farther apart, but the twilight closed into night and we spoke no words.

It must have been ten o'clock when he sat up and spoke to me through the darkness.

"Thank you, Jack; it's over now; forget it with me, old man, won't you?"

I didn't hear of her engagement to Langham for nearly a month afterward and then I wondered what the Boy would do if he met the Major who was coming out to settle up some diplomatic frontier business before he left the service and settled down to a well earned rest at home. He had the reputation of being a clever diplomat and border organizer, as well as a gallant soldier; and there was a K. C. B. in the background awaiting the successful issue of the present complication.

Meantime the Boy went quietly on his way with never a whimper after that first night, but I knew that he was laying lines at headquarters for a transfer up to the great Northwestern frontier—the only place in India

where there was the continual promise of active service.

This frontier is policed by some forty thousand horse and foot—mostly Goorkhas, Sikhs, Punjabis and English—all picked men and trained to the minute. These men are constantly on the move from one desolate mud fort to another, lugging their mule batteries after them. They are under the supervision of a dozen political agents who are present at most of the hangings and village-burnings to represent British Law.

The life of these soldiers is probably the grimmest and hardest of any in the service and proportionately the least well-paid, as their frontier work, however brilliant, is ignored, if not smothered, on account of the delicate feelings of the British taxpayer, who, somehow, always gets the idea that the worst kind of Border Rushers, blood-thirsty cut-throats with a score of murders to their discredit, are saintly patriots leading a popular cause against a big, bullying Power.

Now these border chiefs have a pretty good idea just how the land lies and exactly how much they can twist the Lion's tail before he'll bite; his growl they have long since

learned to despise; and this same Lion has learned to stand an awful lot up on the border. The chiefs are rude, and any respectable murderer with a little tactful display, can get up a very pretty revolt. They rush a police station and, if they have good luck, kill an English officer and then bombard one of the mud forts in the middle of the night when our folks are getting their beauty sleep. We send a polite message asking them to refrain till after breakfast, which they answer with their customary rudeness and then retire to some impregnable fastness among the rocks and raise a torn cotton rag on a stick and call themselves a successful rebellion. Their runners also announce a big victory (represented by the firing on the fort at night during which one water-bullock was killed and an earthen chattie wounded) over the British.

During the next month a whole lot of nasty little clans gather round the rag on the stick and insist that they are having a war with England. The Indian Government humors them awhile, because of the absurd taxpayer at home; but at last the chief (probably some half-crazy Mullah), cuts down a Government

mail-runner and then there's a sudden massing of men and guns on a moonless night, a long ride that's as silent as death, over the border, and next morning at dawn, to the Mullah's utter disgust and consternation he finds his position surrounded.

If he's wise he comes down and surrenders, is made much of and is pensioned; (for the edification of the home papers) but if his gray matter happens to have a few extra specks on it he fights like the black devil he is and before you know it, a troublesome war is on and at the slightest British reverse the whole border flames up, and ten thousand hairy hillsmen rush for their hidden guns and sweep down on the valley, bent on fire, rapine and murder.

This was about the kind of thing that Grant and I got into when our wire-pulling brought us the change we wanted. He had charge of a little mud affair known as Fort McPherson, while I was commissioned to ride up and down a certain border district day and night, dispensing quinine and calomel ad lib.

Just why Mullah Fez Khan chose to harass this one little apology for a fort during his

raids, is still an open question. We were the most peaceable crowd on the line, this particular Paythan was absolutely unknown to us, yet night after night he persisted in bombarding us with rifle shot from an adjacent hill. He didn't do any real damage, only the constant "phut! phut! phut!" of the bullets on the roof and walls, with an occasional one in the steward's mess-room, kept us guessing as to whether it was just a bluff or we really were going to be rushed. Of course, he was snuggled away in his den by dawn and, officially, the beast hadn't been near us at all.

Naturally, we were just boiling over to get out and have a go at the old villain but orders were too emphatic; not a cartridge must be exploded before Major Langham got back. The diplomatic relations with Khandahar were strained and involved and it was well known that a single pistol shot might be the first of an expensive military expedition which would be a fine occasion for the home papers to rail against the opposition's "Bloody policy of Annexation." So we lay close and waited for our turn. But Fez Khan thought we were afraid and so he

rushed us one dark night, under cover of his rifles from the hill.

The devils were over the mud wall and into the court among the night guard before we were fairly awake and then as stubborn a bit of fighting as I ever saw came off. The Boy was in the thick of it, dressed in the lower half of his pajamas and slippers. Of course every knife of the whole cut-throat crew was aimed at his gleaming white chest, but the little Goorkhas banked round him in a solid mass and drove their short swords home with such fearful skill and joy that Fez himself ordered the retreat, which they affected through the gate we had considerately opened for the purpose.

Just as the last rush went through, the Boy sprang clear of his faithful Goorkhas and broke for the gate. It might have been the lust of battle, but I doubt it; anyway, I'd been watching him and jumped for him on the instant, yelling for the men to follow.

A dozen Afghans turned as the Boy sprang out; one went down with a badly spoiled face and then there was another nasty mix-up; but we got him back in and shut the gate.

Three nights later, five stations were at-

tacked simultaneously and the standard of revolt was up.

Orders reached us on the fifth day; and that night the Boy and I, with fifty Goorkhas, silently made our way across the border.

Of course, I had no earthly business mixing up in the mess at all; no one had any use for thermometers or quinine over the border. Sickness was too sudden and short; the flare of a gun, the flash of a knife, then a moment of blinding darkness as the soul let go, and nothing was left but—vengeance!

But I'd taken to the Boy and got to love him like a younger brother. I was a lonely man and he seemed to have filled an empty corner in my heart that long had been given over to ghosts; for once on a time I, too, had had a letter from home that had changed my life and made me come to prize a blooded horse and a man's honor beyond all else—even the love of woman or God.

But it takes time to get hardened, and meanwhile—I'd made up my mind to see the lad through, so I tramped by his side that night.

It was a weird night march and as silent as caution could make it. Four lithe little

Goorkhas crept ahead, feeling the way with naked knives as they followed the click of their military compasses and on either side and behind we had flung out our guards, while the rest of us trod cautiously with muffled accoutrements. Shortly after midnight our left flank touched another silent company and an an hour later we heard the grind and clink of a mule-battery, with now and again a whip-crack and a hoarse curse from the drivers; and then a man dashed across our company with a rough oath, to try and quiet the noisy battery.

"Langham Sahib!" volunteered one of the little men at my side, and I glanced uneasily at Martin, but his head was down and I doubt if he heard.

Well, I suppose it was that damned noisy mule-battery that did the business; at any rate, it began to slip and pound on the rocks as we went up the hill, in a manner that made our blood run cold. Fez had his flag up in a perfect natural rock fort, the only approach to which was naked ground composed of slippery rocks that sloped gradually up to a narrow gorge. Once this gorge was reached the way was fairly protected, save

for a couple of hundred yards of broken ground at the other end.

Our hope was to carry the gorge with a rush in the early dawn, before the Mullah got wind of us and then shell his little fort till he got tired of the fun. But at the last moment one of the guns got stuck (they always do) and that finished our last chance.

It's difficult to tell whether the enemy's move was just a hurried fluke, or a well-planned ambush; of course, the result had to be the same in the long run, the rag on the stick was bound to come down and the Mullah's head with it. But oh! the way of it! The way of it was exceeding bitter!

The sky was lighting in soft grays and greens as we broke from cover at the foot of that mile slope that led to the fort. Langham looked long and anxiously through his glasses then gave an angry snort. The hill-top was alive with men but, strange to say, the gorge was empty. There was a moment's halt, then a bugle rang out, and away we went on a long, swinging trot.

Perhaps we'd gone two hundred yards—certainly not more—just enough to get the whole force clear of cover, when there came

a single rifle-shot, sharp and clean on the morning air; then, before we had fairly realized it, a murderous fire swept our flank.

The men halted, wavered a moment as the rocks echoed to the patter of naked, rushing feet; then they swung into squares. That was the trouble. If we'd only had time for one formation the thing never would have happened; but there was no time and we squared as we ran, in squads and companies. Then when the wave swept over and broke us, we hacked and chopped our way to the next nearest square.

God! what a morning that was! No noise, mind you, except the terrible "Deen! Deen!" of the hillsmen as they rushed down to the fight; just the heavy, savage breathing and the crunch of boots on the stones, with now and again a brutal laugh as Private Atkins showed some Paythan giant "a way we have in the army," or a Goorkha's treble yell as he did some equally nasty thing.

And the battery—well, the battery was safe in the middle of a big square, the crush outside being too dense to give it any show.

I stuck to the Boy during the first two rounds, then we broke badly and it was a

hand to hand hacking match for ten minutes. I had all I could do to stand off the brute who singled me out as his special business. My sword had broken at the hilt in the first rush; still the hilt makes a very serviceable knuckle-duster, as you'll find if ever you have occasion to use it. But the more I slammed the chap's head, the more fiercely he came back at me; and I believe he'd have got me in the end, for I was deadly tired, but one of the Sikh gunners with a knife tied on to his cleaning rod, reached over and prodded him through the throat. 'Twasn't fair, I know, and his eyes protested to mine as he went down. Still, he wasn't the only brave man that fell under unfair odds that morning, and I was glad enough to crawl between the sturdy brown legs and roll into the square. It took us over two hours to get back to cover and shake the devils off and then I looked for the Boy, but looked in vain. At last I found his orderly, gesticulating wildly to a lot of Sikhs, upbraiding them and pointing to the hills. As he spoke, the Adjutant rushed up:

"Doctor, where's the Major?"

And before I could answer, the Goorkha

saluted and spoke:

"In the nullah, Sahib."

"Good God! Alone?"

"No Sahib, Lieutenant Grant Sahib followed him and some Punjabis; but Sahib, Punjabis are no good and these dogs" (with a gesture of superb contempt at the Sikhs), "won't go."

"How was it? Quick!"

"They broke the Major Sahib's square—may their souls rot for a thousand years in hell—and shut him off so he couldn't get in; and he backed away to the nullah with the crowd all on top of him. Then Grant Sahib—he was with us—he makes a sudden run and breaks out and up the hill. Sahib, we follow him but the children of Hell rush us again and bear us back and only ten get through—and now these dogs, these Punjabis——."

"Bugler, quick! 'Battery advance'! Company B Goorkhas to the front! Skirmishers out, quick, Douglas! Reserves at a hundred yards. Now boys" (to the 14th Limerick), " you hear what's there; dust up the hill and fetch 'em out! Steady! Bayonets! By y'r right—quick march! Double! Charge!"

Did you ever see a big crowd of men

dominated by one idea and united as to the method of execution? If you have, you've seen one of the most potent forces in the universe.

The Goorkhas and the Irish led away, each striving to outdo the other, while the Punjab rifles covered the advance; the battery meantime playing havoc with the Paythan rushes. We cleared the last hundred yards at a hard run, the rocks resounding with wild Irish yells. The hillsmen, who had been trying to force the nullah, broke like wind-driven reeds before the furious dash; and, with hardly the loss of a man, we gained the sheltering rocks.

As the Adjutant pressed through the gap I was at his shoulder and heard the faint cry of welcome. Three men started out to meet us—three gallant heroes—Punjabis at that; but the men we had come to save—well, we were a little late, that's all.

They were lying in the basin of the nullah that they had held so bravely; the boy with his arms flung across the Major's chest, as though he would protect him even in death.

The men crowded in and stood looking at the little group of dead, and the Irish hel-

mets came off while the big dare-devils choked and coughed and slunk away. The Goorkhas knelt and kissed their brethren, and one touched the boy's torn coat with reverent lips. Then they, too, went out, and made obeisance to the Punjabis, calling them "Brothers."

As I lifted the boy his coat came loose, and under his singlet I found a scarlet slipper. I drew it away to use the stethoscope. The little French heel had bruised the firm, young flesh, but the heart lay quite still.

As I knelt beside him, I tried to argue that it was all foolishness—waste; that the woman was utterly unworthy, that neither she nor the man would ever know, yet deep in my heart another voice was speaking, and it told me that the thing was grand—immeasurably beyond my little callous philosophy.

While I still knelt a burly Irish Sergeant saluted the Adjutant:

"Excuse me, sor, but if yez doan't want thim Irish divils outside to go clane stark crazy yez'll give th' order ter close this incident." And, with eyes that were suspiciously bright, he gave a deprecating wave of his hand toward the silent group.

The Adjutant gave the order, and that night the incident was closed.

THE END.

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